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FRANCE AND THE SUPPLY SCANDAL

FRENCH indignation, a mild expression of which was found in M. Maurois' appeal for immediate aid, is directed not against our soldiers, but against the men responsible for arming and equipping them. The munitions supply scandal in 1940 far surpasses that of 1915; it is comparable only with that of the Crimean War. It is not the fault of the present Government or the present Minister who have inherited an Augean stable. The proportion of the scandal can be realised by a single simple calculation. Fourteen months ago conscription was introduced: instead of a small expeditionary force of 100,000 men, we prepared to build a large-scale modern army. At the beginning of the war, it must have been known that we should by now have a million men under arms: and this implied that the Ministry of Supply must provide equipment for that number. This week it was admitted in Parliament that we could not even re-equip the divisions evacuated from Flanders, roughly 250,000 men. So far from providing equipment for 1,000,000 the Ministry had failed to provide equipment for half that number. Nor should we forget that even the equipment provided proved inadequate. We are short of everything from small-arms ammunition to heavy tanks: we cannot even provide all the L.D.V. with rifles.

Those are the facts. It is silly to disguise them, since Hitler knows them far better than a public gulled by the complacent speechifying of Mr. Burgin and his senior colleagues. Mr. Morrison in his remarkable speech last Wednesday could claim great improvements in some sections of supply. But if we are to be fair to ourselves and to our French allies, we cannot leave in positions of responsibility men who may be good enough in their way but who are quite unable to deal with this situation. Questions are inevitably being asked about the gross failure of tank production. A new Tank Board, has been appointed. But the critics are advisory and the same officials seem to be in charge. Are they the best available. No one is looking for scapegoats; no one with any sense wants to waste time in recriminations. But, if this war is to be fought, the men in key positions of management must be men with experience and records of success in the sphere of industrial management. Conscientious civil servants, flavoured with a sprinkling of University dons, have shown their incapacity. Men who have proved their power to build and control great industrial enterprises have been frozen out. We recognise to the full Mr. Morrison's great qualities and the confidence placed in him by the public. But not even a magician could turn the present staff of the Ministry of Supply into an efficient body. Mr. Morrison must be able to feel that he will have the support of the British people in dismissing the men whose incompetence makes us unable to give adequate support to our French allies in their hour of need If he is to cure the patient, he must use the surgeon's knife.

Reconstruction in this country comes desperately late. What may rank as the most decisive battle in modern history rages, now in its second week, over a front of two hundred miles from the Argonne to the sea. The French are defending nothing that could properly be called a "line," unless their original front of rivers and canals deserved that name. Their system of defence is elastic: at many fortified points they await with artillery the onset of the tanks, hoping to check their impetus before the infantry, motorised or on foot, can follow where they have penetrated. In this offensive it seems that the Germans are making less use of dive-bombers, possibly because they had in Flanders suffered excessive losses in pilots or planes. This revised French plan of defence contemplates a slow retreat without excessive regret, provided that sufficient heavy losses can be inflicted on the enemy, whose communications, bombed from the air, become increasingly difficult as the advance progresses. We should judge that though the French are fighting with superb courage and resource, and are inflicting great losses on the enemy, they have had to yield ground too rapidly at several vital points. On the eighth day they have been driven back to the line of the Seine and the Marne. Under cover of a screen of "artificial clouds" the Germans are struggling to throw

pontoon bridges over the Seine, in order to carry out a wide encircling movement with their right flank. They have cut communications first with Dieppe and then with Le Havre. In the East, three German thrusts across the Aisne compelled the French to withdraw to the southern banks of the Marne. The Government, meanwhile, has been transferred to Tours from Paris, which the civilian population is quitting en masse by road and rail. It is not probable that any attempt will be made to hold Paris by a prolonged defence. More British troops have gone to France, but our aid is still on a very small scale.

Enter the Second Murderer

To waste moral indignation on Italy's entry into the war is to pay Mussolini too high a compliment. Fascism begins with a repudiation of every restraint of morals, every link of solidarity between nations. The Second Murderer in this melodrama has drawn his stiletto from its sheath at a signal from the First Murderer: that is all. To talk as some of us are doing, of "treachery," is only to expose our own simplicity. The Duce, in spite of Mr. Chamberlain's ill-judged courtship, has proved for the *n*th time that treaties and agreements will never avail to turn a gangster into a "gentleman." The oration which accompanied his declarations of war on Britain and France dispensed even with a pretext. It was a frank confession of the mere lust for power and possession. He covets what these Powers possess. One might point out, if rational debate were possible, that Italy's economic claims could have been satisfied, as her grievances that turn on our control of the gateways to the Mediterranean could have been remedied peacefully through a strong and vital international authority. That was wrecked partly by the insatiable greed of Fascism and partly by the fact that when the opportunity of a constructive settlement existed it was made not as an offer of a new internationalism, but as a series of bribes to insatiable gangsters.

What Hitler gains by Italy's belligerency is a first-rate strategical position and a second-rate army. We may expect him to make an appropriate use of both. It is probable that German troops will be used to attack France through the Alpine passes or along the shores of the Riviera, while Italian troops may relieve the Germans in mounting guard along the quieter stretches of the Front. Mussolini's reassurance to the neutrals that he will not attack them, if they remain passive, may mean that Hitler expects him to use all his strength in the first instance against the French and ourselves: he can gather miscellaneous booty later. Russian pressure has contributed to this decision. The restoration of diplomatic relations between Rome and Moscow probably means that a temporary agreement has been reached, to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula. The attack on Jugo-Slavia in particular is indefinitely postponed.

The appropriate strategy for the Allies in these conditions would seem to be a withdrawal, in whole or part, from the Eastern Mediterranean. We cannot use this sea as a highway for our shipping. Our obvious course, therefore, is in one way or another to block the Suez Canal. Some help, in arms at least, should be given to the Abyssinians to recover their freedom, and the Jews in Palestine must be supplied with arms for self-defence. Cadres may possibly be left to stiffen Egyptian resistance. But with these minor exceptions, it seems clear that every available plane, tank and man should be recalled to help in the defence of France. This has, we understand, been done to some extent, but the more thoroughly and logically it is done the better. The defence of France is at this stage the centre of the battle. No success in any secondary field would compensate for failure here. It is equally true that if we can win this main battle, it will be easy at the end of the war to recover anything that Italy may win this summer.

While it would be folly to forget that Mussolini's decision has terribly worsened the military position of the French, its chief political effect has been salutary. It has turned the United States into a non-belligerent ally. That was evident in the speech which the President delivered a few hours after the Italian declaration of war. He disclosed what he had tried to do by offering his services to lay Italy's claims before the Allies for peaceful settlement, and then delivered the most impressive of many oratorical assaults on American complacency and isolationism. The event showed that so far he has carried the Senate with him, for it has approved the indirect sale of army planes, artillery and rifles to meet the more urgent needs of the Allies. The commission of captains of industry, which is organising the mass production of warplanes, is discussing the plans of Mr. Ford and General Motors to manufacture aircraft by the thousand. All the barriers of neutral prudery are down, and it is obvious that even credit will, if necessary, be granted. America will, in short, give everything but men, and even these, as volunteers eager to be trained as pilots, are crossing the frontier into Canada.

Elsewhere, the political effects of Italy's move are less easy to decipher. A mysterious bombing attack, by unidentified planes, has been made with some loss of life in Geneva and Lausanne. The Turks and Egyptians are temporarising. Spain, to judge by the Falangist press, is passing from neutrality to non-belligerency on the side of the Axis. Good observers guess that within a few weeks German and Italian planes will be bombing the cities of Southern France from Spain. Resourceful governments in London and Paris would prepare for a new dose of non-intervention. There are still on the French side of the Pyrennees a hundred thousand Republican veterans who would gladly cope with this menace, to say nothing of the Basques, the Asturian miners and the population of Franco's crowded prison-camps. Or have we learned so little that we still imagine that flattery from Sir Samuel Hoare can counteract the pressure of the victorious Axis?

In the Levant

The Italian declaration of war has made both for Egyptians and Turks a puzzling political problem. The Egyptians have adopted an interim solution by breaking off diplomatic relations. This does not mean war, and might continue indefinitely, if it suited both sides. But the numerous Italian colony is being interned in large numbers. Even less compatible with a condition of nominal peace is the fact that British warplanes, flying from Egyptian territory, have bombed the Italian harbour at Tobruk in Libya with some success. This anomalous relationship may be as irregular as it is illogical, but it may none the less serve our wider strategic interests, for we cannot wish for a "side-show" in the Levant while France is in mortal peril. The Turks, on the other hand, have broken off not diplomatic but commercial relations, and to this first step away from peace they have added the precaution of recalling their shipping to port. Their relations with the Soviet Union are thought to be better and more friendly than they were when Mr. Sarajoglu was so heavily snubbed in Moscow. The Turks are with us in sentiment as in interest, and they nourish an angry and contemptuous grudge against the Power which seized Rhodes and proposed to colonise the mainland behind it. But for the moment they may judge that non-belligerency is for them the wiser course. From the British and French standpoints, would it be our cue to ask them to take charge of the defence of Syria, Palestine and Egypt against a possible Italian attack?

The Tragedy in Norway

The adventure of the Allies in Norway, from the first a chaotic and criminally ill-planned enterprise, has been finally liquidated. The Allied troops in Narvik, British, French and Polish, have been evacuated, and with them King Haakon, with a part of the remnant of his army, was carried as a refugee to a Scottish port. The rest of the Norwegian army has been forced to capitulate to save what is left of Norway from destruction. The story of Norway is one of the most tragic. No people could be more opposed to Facism. Yet betrayed from within, help from without has failed. A remnant of the Army remains to carry on the struggle on other fronts. It is small consolation that the port has been so thoroughly destroyed that the export of iron ore may be impossible for several months. Other routes, especially that of Lulea, are open to the Germans till November. The policy of withdrawal, however distasteful, was in our judgment wise. Every man, plane and machine gun is needed for France. The loss during these operations of the big aircraft-carrier *Glorious*, with two destroyers, an empty transport and a tanker was a warning of the high cost we should have incurred had the school which wanted a policy of "spreading the war" had its way. These losses at sea stand to the credit of the German battle fleet, which clearly is not as negligible as our propaganda had declared.

The Work of the R.A.F.

What is the proper function of the Royal Air Force in France? An expert correspondent points out that Germany can best be defeated by hastening the breakdown of her transport system. That, with the inadequacy of her oil supply, is her weak point. Her railways, under the strain of last winter's frosts, all but broke down. Can she win the war before they finally give out and she runs out of oil? It follows that the best thing the R.A.F. can do is to bomb railway junctions, oil refineries, and oil dumps, and to go on bombing them so persistently that any normal flow of traffic shall be impossible. Far behind the Front, over a vast area, the enemy's defences are at their weakest; whereas at the Front itself his power of defence is at its maximum. The German shortage of oil is, by the way, one of the explanations of the inferiority of German pilots to our own. There was not oil enough to train them. Our young pilots had an unlimited supply.

Milk

A rise in milk prices was announced by Mr. Boothby in the House of Commons on Tuesday, on account of the increased costs of distribution. At the same time, Mr. Boothby announced that a pint of milk a day at 2*d.* was to be made available for every expectant or nursing mother and for every child under school age, and that free milk would be supplied, under a scheme now being prepared, to households which could not afford to buy it. This scheme would replace that put forward by the Health Ministry last summer, but applied only in a very few places. It would involve a "simple criterion of need," but not a Means Test as ordinarily understood. Mr. Boothby further stated that the Food Ministry had in hand a detailed investigation of the costs of milk distribution with a view to greatly reducing it by an improved scheme. These arrangements are a mixture of good and bad. Everyone knows that the costs of distributing milk are scandalously high; and it is surely a mistake to increase prices for liquid milk, which have been kept at an outrageous level by the Milk Marketing Board as a means of subsidising milk used in manufacture. What is needed is a unified public scheme of milk distribution, coupled with a general reduction in the retail price in order to increase liquid consumption. The liquid price is so much above the manufacturing price even now that higher liquid consumption would increase the Board's receipts even if the price were reduced. Perhaps the Food Ministry's full scheme, when it comes, will put everything right; but we fail to see any good reason for raising prices now.

Family Allowances on the Way

It looks as if Family Allowances are well on the way. They are being applied already in the case of Mr. Bevin's trainees; and it is difficult to see how the Government can avoid incorporating them in the general plan for wartime control of wages which is now under discussion. If wages are to be stabilised, in conjunction with a drastic restriction on other forms of income, serious hardships are bound to be created in face of rising prices, when family allowances are made available as a supplement to wages. Moreover, there can be, under existing conditions, no doubt about the right method of financing the allowance system. The money must come from the State; for there can be no case for finding it either under a contributory system or by means of employers' pools. If the charge is put on the employer the effect must be to raise prices; and an attempt to put the charge on wages would be strongly resisted unless wages were raised by an equivalent amount—which would again raise prices. The obviously sensible course is to put the cost on the State and to combine the institution of the system with control over all essential commodity prices as well as over wages and other incomes. Trade Unionists, who have hitherto been divided over the question, on the ground of the possible effects on collective bargaining, will surely see that their doubts are inapplicable to a state of affairs in which it is vitally necessary to put first needs first, and to ensure that the children shall not suffer most when goods are short.

Making Control Work

The Government has taken an important step forward by bringing some 1,500 factories which are producing munitions under State control, so that their owners will henceforth be working directly under Government orders. But this is only a first step. We are increasingly convinced both that this sort of control will have to be extended swiftly to all important industries, and not merely to those producing munitions, and that the attempt to combine State control with continued working for private profit will break down. Surely the right course is to take these establishments over completely, paying their managers salaries and their owners fixed rents for their wartime use by the State. Many managers, and not a few owners, would welcome this. because it would mean responsibility to a single master, in place of divided responsibility to the Government and to owners thinking in terms of present and future profit-making. All this is merely one aspect of the whole problem of wartime economic reorganisation that has still to be squarely faced.

The Cabinet and the Commons

The Secret Session planned for last Tuesday was very properly postponed. Much has been said in the Conservative press about recrimination and "the search for scalps." All that is beside the point. The demand for a full discussion of the Belgium tragedy came not from a vindictive spirit and certainly not from a Labour desire to throw out Tory Ministers. The demand came from Service men of all parties and most of all from Conservatives. It arose from a belated realisation of the extent to which the B.E.F. and the country had been let down by Ministers and Civil Servants who, however well-meaning as individuals, are now clearly seen to have been incompetent. Mr. Churchill understands that very well. But the controversy puts him in a very difficult situation. The strength of his administration lies in its anti-Chamberlainite elements, derived from all Parties, but its parliamentary majority still depends on Captain Margesson and his obsequious back-benchers. It is these men, not the critics of the Chamberlain government who are still thinking on Party lines. We need our best men in the key positions, and every change must be justified on the basis of drive, efficiency and the capacity to plan and to utilise the public's eagerness to co-operate. Mr. Chamberlain is now in a position not unlike that of Ramsay Macdonald after 1931: attacks upon him are now superfluous. Sir Kingsley Wood is a different case. Having grossly misled both Parliament and the country about our strength in the air, he has now been promoted to the Exchequer; this might not matter were it not that he probably sympathises with the Treasury policy which is now universally admitted to have been wholly inadequate. Again Mr. Eden is rightly one of the most popular men in this country and should certainly be in the Government. Our doubt is if he is the man to shake the War Office out of somnolence, and create in a few weeks our defence organisation. The problem is immense. Even Mr. Morrison and Mr. Bevin with their great qualities are finding their job of reorganisation blocked at every point by obstructionism and red tape. Their difficulties are certainly not greater than those which confront the Minister of War. If he or anyone else is to carry out the task, they must be assisted by men who understand the capacities and outlook of the civilian population and are prepared to fight the professional soldier who refuses to enlarge his vision. In brief, Mr. Churchill's Cabinet is faced with the task, at desperately short notice, of breaking through the vested interests of lethargy and good form, and galvanising its officials and advisers into action or, alternatively, retirement. This is no time for recriminations: but it is a time when every Cabinet Minister shall be selected for his power of leadership and not for his services to a party. That is the one compelling reason which prompts us to discuss reconstruction as a necessity in the near future.

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THE DEFENCE OF BRITAIN

ALMOST unaided by this country, except for the destructive work of the R.A.F., the French army is fighting the battle for France. That is the measure of the failure of the last Government, which promised, at the beginning of the war, that within a year we should have 1,400,000 men trained and equipped. In the short run, and that is the only run that counts, Mr. Churchill cannot make up for the negligence and lassitude of his predecessor. But we can and must send every man available, whether fully equipped or not, to reinforce the exhausted French armies and slow up the German advance.

While the battle rages we must grapple with the problem of home defence. Although the measures taken are shrouded in secrecy, it is unfortunately clear that the War Office is not being cleansed and revitalised to the same degree as the Ministries of Labour and Supply. Defence against invasion is still regarded as a technical military and naval problem. The genius of National Socialism lies in its unification and imaginative use of every weapon of warfare. Instead of the rigid departmentalism which existed in all the belligerent countries in the last war, Hitler has evolved a Supreme Command which plans and directs the activity of his war machine, and correlates political, economic and purely military factors in an entirely novel way. Against this new type of total warfare the professional soldiers appear to be mere amateurs, directing the campaign according to rules which have been superseded by their opponents.

For what is the real problem? We should already regard this country as though it were a part of France some hundred miles behind the present battle line. That is not scaremongering. If the French are driven back south of Paris, and if Hitler, as we must presume, is determined on the conquest of Britain, this country will become a theatre of war and will be compelled to organise not only its military defences, but its industry, its communications and its method of government to meet this emergency. Immune from invasion for hundreds of years we have become accustomed to regarding war as something which takes place on the Continent and Britain as an area safe behind the lines, and although that illusion has now been destroyed, there is no evidence that the War Office has the imagination to create a real emergency defence against invasion. What is needed are not professional military brains, cribbed within the confines of field service regulations, but men who can see the problem as a whole, devise alternative plans to meet alternative threats, extemporise unorthodox measures and make use of resources which professional soldiers rule out of account.

We have already urged the use of men with experience of the last war to stiffen our war militia and to take responsibility in home defence. When we suggest the enlargement of the militia or the L.D.V., we are told that this is limited by a shortage of equipment, both of small arms and of small arms ammunition. Granted this shortage we must have imagination to extemporise alternative armament: hand-grenades and petrol bombs are useful against tanks and mechanised invaders. The Spanish Republicans in the Civil War evolved a technique which enabled them to destroy tanks with sticks of dynamite. Our own people, with vastly greater resources and a longer familiarity with machinery, are at least as fit to improvise and use unorthodox methods of defence. We have already urged a total civilian evacuation from particularly dangerous coastal areas and the mobilising of all the available manpower for the erection of fortifications. As we write a large part of our building trade is still engaged on civilian building of no immediate need. Only last week a deputation of workers at present constructing steel shelves for the Bodleian Library came to London to protest against the use of a vital material for a purpose that is not immediate. Such deputations should be unnecessary. Building trades workers not engaged on work of national importance should be organised now into gangs for the construction of strong points, for demolition work and other defence duties. When invasion is attempted these gangs will be more useful than Local Defence Volunteer posses armed with a few rifles. They will be urgently needed to repair damaged aerodromes, railway junctions and other focal points in our system of communications. Long term constructions are now unimportant, the one question which matters is whether we can survive Hitler's attack this summer. Nor is it scaremongering to suggest that the proposal made by Mr. John Parker in the *Times* should be immediately adopted. Invitations from the Dominions should be accepted and as many children as possible should be evacuated overseas with their parents' consent. In modern warfare it is plain common sense to reduce the non-combatants to the smallest possible figure, and enable women who are willing to take part in the war effort to be free from domestic responsibilities.

We make these suggestions chiefly to indicate the frame of mind in which our defence against invasion must be planned. It must be a total defence if it is to be effective in a total war, and this means that purely military measures can only form a small part of the whole plan. With the best will in the world General Ironside cannot fulfil his task unless he is prepared to use the civilian population as well as the professional soldier, and the civilian as well as the military mind.

The other side of the defence of Britain is the precautions against the Fifth Column. Here, too, there is more evidence of hysteria than of cool planning. Instead of taking the measure of Hitler, some officials seem to be reacting like rabbits disturbed at feeding time. Determined "to do something" they have seized upon the refugees as an easy and defenceless scapegoat, permitted and sometimes encouraged the public to regard them all as potential spies, and thus deflected attention from the real problem. There is, we believe, no evidence at all that any considerable percentage of refugees are Fifth Columnists. They are the most watched and helpless part of the community. True they talk with foreign accents, but so does an Oxford graduate in Glasgow. Thousands of men, women and children whom we voluntarily received into this country in full knowledge of the risks of war, are now harried and persecuted and, worst of all, refused permission to do work which, under supervision, they could do, without risk and with great advantage. No attempt has been made soberly to analyse which are the reliable anti-Nazi elements; on the contrary in many cases men and women with years of experience in the fight against Hitlerism have been thrown into gaol or interned, whereas "non-political" refugees—that is refugees who did not take part in resistance to Hitlerism—are permitted to be at large.

We agree that once the public hysteria against refugees had been created there was no possibility of letting them work freely and side by side with British citizens. But is there any conceivable reason why five thousand women should be sitting in boarding houses in the Isle of Man with nothing whatsoever to do, why skilled workers in the prime of life, who are crying out for a job, should be deliberately classed as unemployable? Thousands of refugees want to play their part in the defence of Britain because the defence of this island is the means to the liberation of their country. Organised under British supervision the men could now be set to work on forestry or agricultural employment. There is plenty of work such as sewing which the women would be proud to do at home if they were permitted, or in the internment camps, if internment must be their fate. Instead of regarding seventy thousand victims of Hitlerism as pariahs, it would be perfectly possible, were the Home Office prepared to take expert advice, to divide them into three classes: first, a number of entirely reliable elements experienced in the war against Hitlerism, whose advice and collaboration in many cases would be invaluable for our propaganda in Germany; these people at present are not even permitted to have a wireless, and are thus disqualified even from listening to our German propaganda and giving their constructive criticism of it. Secondly, the non-political majority against whom nothing is known. These should be set to work only under British supervision. Thirdly, the doubtful or suspicious elements. These of course should be interned. And, while mentioning the question of internment, we must add that it is an outrageous act of inhumanity to push Jews and other internees into the same camps as active Nazis and Gestapo agents who bully and threaten them as if this were not England that had offered them protection. In these camps the two opposing groups, Nazis and anti-Nazis, face each other as openly organised units. To separate them would be as easy as it would be convenient and humane. If the Home Office could treat the refugee problem sanely, it would be able to give more attention to the real problem of the Fifth Column, whose organisation in this country is probably of a more subtle kind.

To sum up: there is only too much evidence that both the War Office and the Home Office still combine a subservience to antiquated routine with a nervous anxiety to "do something" in order to allay public anxiety, while the new Cabinet has not yet worked out an imaginative comprehensive plan for defence against invasion. The longer this war continues, the more it must become a people's not a professional soldiers' and departmental administrators' war. Huge reserves of courage and self-sacrifice remain untapped because routineers refuse to tap them. Instead, they waste their energies harrying refugees and encouraging local L.D.V.s to zealous but often misdirected activities. A man is not a Fifth Columnist because he wears a beard or employs a foreign maid. The defence of Britain demands vision, and, above all, confidence in and knowledge of the working people. It is they who will have to do the job when the moment comes.

THE DEATH OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

[The author of this article writes from long experience of the League at first hand.]

UNWEPT, unhonoured and unsung, the League of Nations passed away in the afternoon of May 17th. The obituary notice was contained in a report from Geneva that about four-fifths of the permanent staff of the League Secretariat had been suspended or compelled to resign. Most newspapers did not consider this event sufficiently important to devote to it even a few lines. A skeleton staff remains, unable to work for lack of clerical assistance. No meeting of the League Council, nor of the Assembly is possible, even if the States who retain their membership insisted on its convocation. All that is left is a palatial building, haunted by ghosts, and a few officials entrusted with the vague task of upholding liaison with the remaining Member States—ready at a moment's notice to be transferred from Geneva to Vichy or any other place the Secretary General may choose in the event of Switzerland's invasion. Thus passes one of humanity's noblest dreams and it is not mere coincidence that the actual closing down of the Offices in Geneva coincided with the full blast of the German attack on Holland and Belgium.

The League, as built at Geneva, never had any real chance of success. It was a Committee of sovereign States; no executive power was entrusted to the new organism. Its outward decadence began when the great Powers that controlled it tolerated Japanese aggression in Manchuria; its death sentence was passed when they failed to enforce sanctions against Italy in her war on Abyssinia. Everything that followed was a direct consequence of these failures. Geneva was more and more used cynically as a screen for ulterior aims, as a platform for non-committal declarations of good will, as a dust-bin for diplomatically lost causes. Geneva was used to facilitate every retreat from the international principle. Endless Conferences, called not to deal with problems, but to soothe opinion had only the result of compromising the very idea of diplomacy by Conference. The world Economic Conference and the Disarmament Conference were pretences followed by disastrous increases in tariffs, armaments and all the follies of exclusive nationalism. The nations would have taken the path to hell without the League, but the result of linking these tendencies in the public mind with League idealism contributed to the decadence of the idea of international collaboration.

This is not a moment for an assessment of the direct responsibility for the final breakdown. It is a truism to say that the State Members of the League destroyed it by their progressive disregard of the Covenant and a powerful argument can be built up against each of the great Powers as mainly responsible. Or put it another way and say that the failure is due to a social system in which States were organised in the interests of those who desired not a new world, but the retention of the *status quo*. One day the full story will be written. Among other factors it will be shown how the weariness and exhaustion of the world after 1918 led, as one of its after-effects, to the occupation in nearly every country of all outstanding positions by frankly second-rate men. With few exceptions and apart from a few episodes like Locarno, international affairs were handled by men without vision and courage, by yes-men who owed their careers to those very qualities or lack of qualities which made them unable to act, by diplomatists and civil servants without imagination and with an instinctive fear of taking responsibility. The men who would perhaps have been able to lift the world out of its progressive decay were either in opposition to the powers of the day or lay rotting in the fields of Flanders and the plains of Poland and Russia. To watch the diplomatists at close range during a crisis at Geneva was to know despair and impending doom.

The League organisation was not itself responsible for this spirit of timidity, but there was something intangible in the Geneva atmosphere which encouraged such an attitude. Truly the *esprit de Geneve* was first and foremost a spirit of good will and international co-operation, but it was also a spirit of self-deception and make-believe. Nowhere outside Geneva—not even in the Imperial and Royal Chancelleries of the eighteenth century—could be found such a belief in *taboos*, in the magic value of the mere formula, such readiness to get over difficulties by ambiguous phrases, such a conviction that it was more important to compromise—to compromise on everything and in all circumstances—than to face issues.

Behind this attitude lay the belief that all difficulties were only due to misunderstandings; that there was essential good will on all sides and that if it were possible just to go on, everything would finally be for the best. This inability to face facts, to take small risks to avoid bigger ones, will long remain a puzzle for future historians who will be in a position to gauge the relative sacrifices necessary to pacify the world from 1930-35 and the sacrifices necessary to win the present war.

It is impossible not to mention in this connection certain personal responsibilities incumbent on those in charge of the Geneva International Administration. Sir Eric Drummond, whatever his shortcomings might have been, left his successor a first-class international civil service. To visit Geneva in those far-away days of 1930 and see the League machinery in action was to recognise a remarkable and efficient organisation. In this administration, composed of nationals of about forty countries, all brought together by the same ideal, the impossible seemed to have become reality. There were no quarrels between individuals because of their nationality, no difficulties in having Germans serving under a French chief, or Englishmen directed by a Greek. There was never even a suggestion of corruption. No doubt this civil service would have been equal to any task of international administration, to any executive responsibility with which it might have been entrusted in the course of progressive development of international co-operation. From the moment he took over Sir Eric's heritage M. Avenol, the new French Secretary General, succumbed to the growing nationalism in Europe and took steps which broke the *esprit de corps* of this administration; he discouraged the tendency of the Secretariat itself to be a positive factor in international co-operation and degraded it into a civil service in which bureaucratic qualities only counted. Any tendency to take responsibility was discouraged; everything was centralised in the typical French manner, in the hands of the head of the administration. M. Avenol is a man of great administrative abilities but without a vestige of inspired leadership.

Whilst this was going on a new opportunity was unexpectedly offered to the League. Parallel with the decline of the political role of Geneva, there was a tendency amongst the States to compensate the political failures of the League by their readiness to intensify their co-operation in what was commonly called the technical work of the League. A man with vision could and would have seized this opportunity. He could have built up certain non-political executive bodies in the economic, social, humanitarian and health fields for which certain patterns already existed in the League's Singapore Health office and in the Central Opium Board. Such work would have given the League a new radiation and perhaps would have even reacted favourably on the sphere of international politics. Instead of this, those responsible for the Geneva work went out of their way to restrict the range of existing technical activities, to discourage the creation of new ones, even in the face of the expressed unanimous wish of the League Assembly. Thus the last chance for the League to do practical work was neglected.

Were it only the dissolution of an administration whose work had become obsolete, there would be no justification in dwelling upon it. What happened, however, is very much more serious. The disappearance of the League Secretariat means that a body of men and women, who, for more than twenty years, had been trained in international work on a super-national basis, has been dispersed. Unique experience acquired at great cost to members of the League has thus been forfeited. Exceptional knowledge of international psychology, of the habit of working with the representatives of dozens of nations, of the faculty of understanding widely different national points of view, of the experience of International Conferences, of the drafting of documents in different languages—all this has now gone beyond repair. An international civil service cannot be improvised. Here, one had been built up with infinite pains and has been abandoned by its proper chief.

Weakened by resignations and dismissals, but potentially useful, this instrument still existed three weeks ago, ready to be called upon to undertake at a moment's notice the manifold tasks which, after the Allied victory, will undoubtedly be vested in an infinitely more powerful machinery for international co-operation. This instrument has now been disbanded through lack of foresight, vision, courage and, perhaps, a few hundred thousand pounds. The staff being dispersed it will indeed be a difficult task to reassemble it again. What remains is a luxurious *palais* in the Park Ariana at Geneva. This Palace, a monument of self-complacency and megalomania, has cost the Members about a million and a quarter pounds sterling. Had this sum been invested in a reserve fund instead of being squandered on the material shell of the League, the best of the machinery could have been preserved for the future.

A LONDON DIARY

Laughter was the commonest reaction to Italy's entrance into the war. Why was this? Partly, no doubt, because owing to a silly British convention Italy suggests macaroni and ice creams and is funny in itself like beer and Wigan. Among some people laughter marked the removal of a lingering doubt. When things are very bad the Englishman laughs and gets tougher. Partly it was because Mussolini's action was so gratuitous, so unbelievably cynical, so incredible and so exactly what we expected. All the ridiculous house of cards, that diplomatic nonsense about "gentlemen's agreements" in the Mediterranean, about the impossibility of Catholic Italy fighting with pagan Germany, all the defence of non-intervention in Spain where the Germans are now mustered in force, the talk about our historic friendship with the Italians and so forth, fell to the ground. What else could you do but laugh? It is against the code to curse in public. And then Mr. Duff Cooper brought off a scintillating debating speech. Here was an Englishman really saying about Mussolini what most Englishmen had long thought. He scored all round the wicket with bitter reproaches about past friendship ignored, present offers rejected and the cowardice of the Italian attack at the moment of our greatest need. All that the Minister of Information said about the helplessness of Italy if Germany wins the war was true enough; none of the reproaches were unjust, and, if one was in a mood for jokes, there was even a wisecrack about the famous ruins of Italy. No doubt some people were also encouraged when he said that the Italians had never won a war except with tanks against spears in Abyssinia, unaided by outside support. But some recollected that in this war Mussolini certainly has an ally. Sensible to reproach the Italians with Caporetto, and to suggest that they are cowards? Mussolini could want no better propaganda to encourage his troops. And what will be the effect in Britain? I cannot think it wise to encourage a foolish contempt for your enemy. "This must be another British victory," remarked a neighbour as we listened to the Minister's jeers. Invigorating stuff for the moment, of course, but would it not have been better to warn people that in the present circumstances the Italians may be in a position to win a number of easy victories in the Mediterranean? The popular myth about the absurdity of the Italian should not be encouraged. Their airfleet may be a serious embarrassment, their submarines and torpedo boats are by no means negligible, and their army, ill-equipped and weak though it may be by itself, may be capable of something more than nuisance value if, as seems clear, it is now merely an adjunct of Hitler's.

* * *

Two pamphlets which I read last week-end provided unusual amount of pleasure in a very small space. The first is W. A. Sinclair's "The Voice of the Nazi" (Collins, 6*d*.). I was delighted to find that this series of broadcasts is as good to read as they were to listen to. Most professors of philosophy keep their jobs by wrapping simple things up in complicated language. Mr. Sinclair has a Socratic talent for analysing complicated things in beautifully simple language. His booklet is a great deal more than a mere antidote to Lord Haw-Haw; it is in fact an elucidation of the principles of propaganda, more thoughtful than many lengthy treatises. It also includes some superb quotations. Here is one from the *12 Uhr Blatt*:

> Attempts are being made to calm the terrified inhabitants of London by the assurance that, in the first instance, cannibals will only be employed to construct fortifications.

Sounds like a Nazi joke? Possibly, though, the context suggests the opposite. The other pamphlet is the new issue of *Labour Discussion Notes*, which contains a thoughtful analysis of the present position of Labour in the Churchill Government and the duty of the Party in the crisis. After stressing that it is the Movement not merely the leaders who have entered the Government, the authors point out the obvious dangers of Mr. Bevin's position *vis-a-vis* the Trade-Unions and the enormous power which vested interests still possess to sabotage his best efforts. They rightly note that whereas before the rise of Hitlerism, Churchill, Amery and Lord Lloyd were the diehards, and Baldwin, Chamberlain, Hoare the "progressives," the situation has now changed. The die-hards now are those who regard the Empire and everything else from the point of view of business-men, the "internationalists" who were prepared to destroy the League and jeopardise the Empire, if not of this island, in a futile effort to preserve the *status quo*: while Churchill is a "progressive" in the sense that he is prepared to sacrifice every private interest to defeat Hitler. That is why the Coalition was possible. Events must finally drive the Margesson-Chamberlain group into opposition or oblivion, when the second stage of the democratic revolution takes place, and Labour's war-aims become recognised as the nation's war-aims. The Socialist Clarity Group, who publish these notes, are that unusual thing, intellectuals who really understand the Labour Movement. The address is 4 Crown Court, Crown Street, Harrow, and the price 2*d*.

* * *

The trial of the P.P.U. officials for displaying a pacifist poster ended, as the saying goes, creditably for everyone. The magistrate took pains to ascertain the views of the men before him and they answered reasonably and with regard to the national danger. Obviously sincere men with unchangeable convictions, they were yet willing to admit that their poster might not be suitable to the times. Their duty, they thought, was to state their philosophy; they never intended to direct propaganda specially to the armed forces. They were bound over after a courteous trial. The dialogue between the magistrate and the pacifists confirmed a long-established view of mine that in total war pacifism can be at best no more than an effort to hold oneself aloof as far as possible from the savagery of the world around one in the hope that there will some day be an opportunity for an opposite philosophy. Because totalitarianism of the mind is the evil we fight I hope, however grisly our danger, that we shall continue to tolerate and respect minority views, sincerely held and moderately expressed. As I write in this office the voices of street orators float up to me making perfectly true points about the foreign policy of the last Government, about the way we have all been tricked and swindled, about imperialism and the rest. It is important not to forget how we got into this horrible situation and those who understand will be wanted when the time comes. But for the moment we have to face the prospect of invasion. It is true again, as a correspondent writes, that the war is degenerating into pure savagery, that the Allies are being forced by the logic of totalitarian war to increasing ruthlessness, that if it continues long the fighting may seem less important than the collapse of civilisation in starvation and disease. These things too must be always in the minds of civilised men who must seize the first moment for peace that comes. But when my correspondent talks about negotiation, he is burking the immediate issue. No compromise I think is in Hitler's mind. Rationally considered it remains true that if there is to be a civilised life in the future—which is certainly problematic now—the only chance is in Hitler's downfall and that there is no way of compassing that except by civilised men forcing themselves to do uncivilised things, even while they preserved their sense of values and their determination to build better in the future.

* * *

I was glad that Harold Nicolson uttered a sensible warning about a spy mania. Stories of absurd scares and mistaken arrests come from many parts of the country. Some are tragic. Here is one that is merely comic. A suspicious-looking individual with a bundle and a protruding stick, assumed apparently to be part of a lethal weapon, was found apparently changing his boots on a railway line. The villagers wasted no time. They rang up Scotland Yard, saying that this was really a serious case, that the man spoke with a German accent, was apparently armed and no doubt a parachutist. Investigation proved that he was a tramp from Scotland, taking off his boots, as tramps will, to rest his tired feet in hot weather.

* * *

In Thursday's *Times* Sir Patrick Hannon quoted with appreciation a letter he had received last October from Count Grandi thanking him and the other members of the Anglo-Italian Parliamentary Committee:

> If my mission and my work have not been entirely unsuccessful, this is because my friends helped and trusted me.

His Excellency was only too successful, and his gratitude has been thoroughly earned by Sir Patrick and his friends. Millions of tons of additional petrol have been sent to Italy despite the blockade to be used against the Allies, because the Italians have had friends in England who "helped" and "trusted" them. Sir Patrick's boast at this moment of his credulity reveals a marvellous simplicity.

* * *

Now that scare posters are forbidden the paper seller himself has a chance to be a headline writer. Here is an ingenious scrawl improvised to sell an evening paper in Piccadilly:

R.A.F. droppa
de hot bomba
on Libya?
No?
Yes?

CRITIC

THE IRISH DANGER

THE danger of invasion is realised in Ireland. Mr. De Valera continues to make speeches about national defence, and for this purpose has made common cause with his political opponents in the Free State. But Ireland is two countries and those who study the Irish press will know that in many of the Free State newspapers and in the pronouncements of bishops there is all the old insistence on the wickedness of partition. The U.D.C. News-Letter of June 12th (obtainable 34 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1) provides an extremely interesting and representative collection of current Irish expressions of opinion on neutrality, partition and the European war. A series of complications are at once revealed. The Free State is Catholic, poorly armed, little industrialised and contains considerable storage of oil. There is in the Free State an I.R.A. army of unknown dimensions. It is violently anti-British and above all bitterly opposed to partition and the Orange Government in the North. Its sympathisers are, however, now in a dilemma. To enjoy British defeats is one thing; to face the prospect of a possible victory of Hitler, whose invasion of Belgium and Holland has been denounced by the Pope and who is the avowed enemy of all religion and of all small nations, is another story. There are now thousands of people in the Free State, who above all want to be left alone and desire neutrality, but who, if the worst came to the worst, would put up with the temporary use of foreign forces in Ireland to repel a German invasion.

Now, look at the North. There we have a narrow Protestant dictatorship which has maintained its hold during the last twenty years by a ruthless repression of the Nationalist minority which amounts to something like 40 per cent. of the population. Ulster, as part of Britain, is already at war with Germany. Though the I.R.A. in the North is being rounded up even more thoroughly than in the South, it is unlikely that the most strenuous efforts of Lord Craigavon can do more than exacerbate the danger. While the I.R.A. in the South has doubts about its allegiance, the I.R.A. in the North has been so treated that there is no doubt at all that its one object is to defeat its own autocratic government. The situation over the whole of Ireland is made worse by the fact that those in charge of the British forces in the North of Ireland have a "Dublin Castle" reputation. It should be remembered that there are in the Free State some 200,000 Irishmen who fought on the Allied side in the last war and that the British Tommy was never unpopular in Ireland. The fury of Irishmen was directed against the Black and Tans and "Dublin Castle." Nothing would so certainly increase the Fifth Column throughout the whole of Ireland as that its defence in the event of a German invasion should be in the hands of men who, however excellent in themselves, have been in the past connected with the British constabulary and with the Craigavon Government. Moreover, the narrow outlook and stubborn temperament of the Ulster Government make co-operation with the Free State in case of German invasion peculiarly difficult. It would seem to be the path of wisdom to appoint to the command in the North a man whose reputation all over Ireland is good or at least neutral in Irish affairs, who could co-operate if necessary with the Government of the South, and who would be calculated rather to reassure that considerable section of the population in the Free State which fears that the protection of Ireland against Germany might be a renewal of the British occupation of Eire.

THE WASTE OF WOMAN-POWER

BY press and broadcast, we are all being urged to work as we have never worked before. But what guidance is given as to how and where to find work? Is not the Government behaving like a fussy man who in an emergency stands on his doorstep shouting "Hurry, hurry," but does not say where to aim at or what road to take?

To put the problem concretely. What is a woman to do, who is not a trained nurse and is disqualified by age from becoming a land-worker, or a lorry-driver, cook or clerical worker in one of the women's services auxiliary to the Armed Forces—these being apparently the only occupations in which there is a stated unsatisfied demand. Even in these, if she applies for one service and finds there is no room, who will tell her in which of the others there is room? Suppose she is an educated woman over forty, trained for a profession in which there are no vacancies and no special relevancy to the war effort. She has put down her name, months ago, on the Central Register (intended only for those qualified for high administrative posts), on the Supplementary Register of the Ministry of Labour (intended for those mid-way between the Central Register class and the ordinary Labour Exchange applicant); also on the Women's War Emergency Register at Bedford College (intended for professional women). She has, perhaps, one chance in a thousand of hearing anything from either of the first two bodies. It was recently stated that out of about 15,000 applicants of both sexes submitted for vacancies from the Central Register, between 200 and 300 women had obtained posts since war started. At Bedford College, she will learn that out of 5,000 registrations, 40 were placed during May and that for women over thirty-five, there is practically "nothing doing anywhere."

She reflects, "Well, munitions are the greatest need. If my brains are not wanted, surely agile fingers guided by brains may be of some use." She calls at the local Labour Exchange, to enquire whether, anywhere in Great Britain, she may find a job. Perhaps, after waiting in a queue for hours, she will be interviewed by a counter clerk, who looks her up and down and, seeing that she is obviously not of the usual artisan type, tells her roughly that they have nothing suitable. Or the clerk may be intelligent and sympathetic. But she will almost certainly (unless my informants, who have tried it repeatedly, have been exceptionally unfortunate) fail to find a job anywhere except in the immediate neighbourhood, and improbably even there. For example, an important Government munition factory wanted a certain number of women workers, for a certain job. The local Exchange told them "No one suitable here." So they sent down a foreman who, within two hours, was able to pick out for himself twenty suitable workers from the women in the queue that day. Theoretically, Labour Exchanges, I hear, have a complete system of transfer from one locality to another. That may be true for highly skilled workers of particular types, but for the ordinary applicant, it just does not work.

She thinks, "If I can't get a full-time paid job, surely there is room in A.R.P. The Home Secretary only last Friday, urged everyone not already enrolled, to go immediately to the local Town Clerk's office." She does so. She finds a small room, with one young woman to attend to a group of waiting volunteers. She secures an application form, for the recording of certain formal particulars about the applicant, but containing no information as to the kinds of work wanted, nor how or where to train for them. With some difficulty she ascertains that the Borough is well staffed already. But there seems no means of ascertaining where there is a scarcity, except by tramping round to every neighbouring Borough.

She tries the Women's Voluntary Service, with much the same result; is told of a superabundance of volunteers for every kind of service.

If these difficulties floor, as I know they do, many educated women, how much more insuperable they must seem to equally capable and patriotic working-class women, who cannot afford to spend endless time on stamps, tram fares and on bearding unresponsive officials. Do they not indicate something wrong about the machinery for piecing supply and demand together? Why not have an official daily bulletin visible at every Public Library, showing just where there are shortages for various classes of workers all over the country? Why not supplement the ordinary Employment Exchange staffs by employment experts of superior type, charged with the duty of advising applicants as to just where and how they should apply and, if necessary, train. Why, above all, not set up a central Woman Power Board to survey the whole field of potential women's employment, institute training schemes where necessary, and direct the flow of the current?

The truth of the matter, I suspect, is that the Government have not yet seriously faced up to the question of Woman Power. They have talked vaguely of one million, two million, women being needed later on. But obsessed with more immediate problems, they have not yet thought the woman question out. Then why do they ignore the experience of those who have thought it out? Do they realise that there exist in this country several bodies of experienced and highly competent women with a knowledge of the whole field of women's employment, some of them dating from the closing years of the last Great War. There is, for example, the British Federation of Business and Professional Women, affiliating nearly all the large professional women's organisations—engineers, nurses, welfare workers, etc. There is the Women's Employment Federation with its War Emergency Register at Bedford College. There is a Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women. So far as the last-named body represents the Women Trade Unionists, possibly it is consulted, as the Ministry of Labour has learnt the necessity of consulting Trade Unions. But except for an occasional nod of recognition or pat on the back, the professional bodies which represent the executive and supervisory grades of women seem to be practically ignored.

Take the question of training. The Women's Engineering Society has on its own initiative and at its own expense set up small classes for training women supervisors in engineering factories in various parts of the country. These have trained about one hundred women of whom three-fourths have been placed. That is a mere drop in the bucket. What is the Government doing about training?

It all looks as though we were to have a repetition of what happened in the Great War. Then, as millions of men were drawn off into the Armed Forces, a really big demand arose for women's substitute labour. But that needed to be trained and training took many months. So the precious months were wasted, though in the end the women workers attained so high a degree of competency that they became capable of almost entirely staffing some munition factories and of building warships (so we were told) almost from start to finish. Extravagant compliments were lavished on the women. They were assured that the war could not have been won without them. But that was a slow moving war. Events are moving faster now. Will the historian of the future have to record that this war has been lost because neither men's labour nor women's labour was available just when and where it was needed to produce in sufficient quantities the precious flow of munitions, planes, tanks and ships? Will it be the old story of "too little and too late"?

ELEANOR F. RATHBONE

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to Cecil Pettigrew

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

If the Rotary Movement can see and will seize the opportunities and the obligations presented by the circumstances of our time, it may well distinguish itself by becoming a sort of priesthood of the new social order, which, in one form or another, is inevitable.—Letter in the *Rotary Wheel*.

Alderman Smith, in an interview to-day, pointed out that they did not know at the moment what type of people might be coming from Belgium and some of the Continental folk had different ideas of living from English people. They did not, therefore, think it was wise to place them in houses on Corporation estates.—*Bradford Daily Telegraph and Argus*.

It is of vital importance that we all have complete faith in our Government.

Can the hundreds of thousands of people in the grocery and provision trades have faith in a Government that, in days such as these, fixes the price of certain sugar at 4¾*d*. per lb. and makes the ration of a soldier on leave 21 oz.?

It is this kind of thing that saps our energy and lowers our fighting spirit.—Letter in the *Grocer*.

MEMORIES

WHO ever loved that loved not at first sight? I am sure that most of us experienced love at first sight when, having whistled and wailed our way under the Alps and passed the end of the tunnel, we set eyes for the first time on Italy. It is true that a few people have been disappointed in Italy. I know a man who, having heard of its beauty, set out for an Italian holiday and on arriving at Milan was so deeply disappointed in the cathedral and the city in general that he turned back and came home again. Then there was the very rich man who, having returned from his first visit to Rome, expressed his opinion of the city in the historic phrase: "You can *'ave* Rome!" Most of those of us, however, who inhabit these western European islands are more susceptible to the Italian charm. The hill-towns perched on the rocks, the olive groves, the vines, the white oxen in the ploughs, the lizards in the sun, the swallow-tail butterflies, the smiling people, the lovely language—how beautiful the numbers "cinque" and "dieci" sound when heard for the first time from the lips of a waiter!—all these things entrance us as we realise that at last we are in Italy.

There can be few more enchanting experiences than one's first journey by train along the valley of the Arno to Florence. To me it seemed a Paradise beyond all my dreams of Paradise, even though I had to stand all the way from Pisa and though a carabiniere at Pisa had startled me by trying to arrest me as a pickpocket. A friend who was travelling with me had had his pocket picked as he jostled through a rush of religious pilgrims, and an Italian, discovering his loss, put his head out of the window and howled for the police. The carabiniere arrived on board the train and interviewed my friend who had become separated from me some yards farther along. My friend, whose small stock of Italian deserted him in the crisis, attempted to tell his story in sign-language, and the carabiniere interpreted at least one of the wavings of his arms as an attempt to point me out as the thief. Squaring his jaws into a bloodthirsty expression, and looking more like Mussolini than Mussolini ever looked himself, he made his way towards me with blazing eyes. "Descendi," he said to me, pointing his finger down to what serves for a platform in Italian stations.

As I looked at him, I got the impression that never before had I seen a man so laden with guns and knives and all sorts of deadly weapons. Perhaps my imagination exaggerated, but at the thought of being led off by such a monster to a Pisa gaol while my friends were carried off to the enchantments of Florence, four out of the five Italian words I knew slipped from me, and French and Gaelic words took their place in my brain. He thrust his finger downwards again, and again he roared "Descendi." I shook my head and smiled what must have looked like the smile of an imbecile, muttered a little French and Gaelic, and added the word "caro," pointing towards my friend along the passage. Just as he was preparing to make a tiger-spring at me, after a third Boanerges cry of "Descendi," another friend who was with me let loose a stream of polyglot gibberish that so impressed him that he turned to me and questioned me, still suspiciously, "Inglese?" "Non," said I—for I hate to tell a lie—; "Irlandese." At that I thought that the veins on his temples would burst, for there were Black-and-Tan troubles in Ireland at the time and I could see in his eyes that he was now convinced that he had caught a man of blood. With the help of a number of people who joined in and talked to each other in languages that the people whom they talked to did not understand, it ultimately became the general view that the party who had had his pocket picked was a friend of the party supposed to be the pickpocket who had picked it. The carabiniere obviously did not like to believe this, but the train was about to start, and, baulked of his prey, he descended from the train with a scowl.

It was not, perhaps, the most promising of introductions to the valley of the Arno; but how could one remember it as one entered the magic of those cypress-covered hills? No one who has breathed amid that landscape of cypresses could ever hate Italy. Italy remains one of our spiritual homes for ever.

Such is the spell of Italy, indeed, that everything under the Italian sky, apart from politics, probably seems better than it is simply because it is Italian. Song seems better—even the popular music-hall song of the hour. Evening after evening, in an October that was still blazing summer, I used to sit in my bedroom window overlooking the Arno and listen to a street songstress singing *Il Ciondolo d'Oro* to the accompaniment of a guitar, played by a man sitting on the river wall, and no song of Mozart's could have given me more pleasure. I am sure an Italian version of *The Isle of Capri* sung in Florence on a moonlight night would have the same effect on me. Once, while I was sitting on the shore of Lake Garda, a boatload of youths passed some way out on the water singing what seemed to me to be an air of extraordinary beauty. "How lovely Italian music is!" I said to my niece who was with me. "That's not Italian music," said she. "That's *I Want to Be Happy* (a song then popular in London). They're singing it in Italian." But how much better "felice" sounds than "happy!"

Italy is a land, indeed, where even the imperfect things seem perfect. The Italian wines are supposed to be commonplace enough beside the French; but I have never tasted bad wine in Italy except one bottle with a sweet port-like flavour from Lake Trasimene, which was recommended to me by a waiter in Assisi. One is prepared to drink sickening wine in Assisi, however, for the sake of being in Assisi. For Assisi's sake I put up even with that vile concoction known as Strega. Also with the food in the hotel, which would have made me ill in England.

Food, wine, churches, pictures, landscapes, song, fountains, people—for the most part, they all seem too good to be true. Those who live for a long time in Italy sometimes tell us that the nightingales do not sing so sweetly there as in England. All I know is that, when I heard them singing in the grounds of Hadrian's Villa, they sang well enough for me. I do not like to hear these criticisms of Italy—apart from politics. I hate to hear a man disparaging the architecture of St. Peter's. To me it is the perfection of majesty, and my appetite for its services knows no sating. When I am in Italy, indeed, I become an addicted churchgoer. I never weary of priestly processions and chantings—"heathen mummery," as an old Protestant lady called them to a friend of mine. If there are any holy relics to be seen, I do not doubt their authenticity. If I am told that I am looking

at a piece of the manger of Nazareth, I can believe this much more easily than I can believe some of the things that I am told by psycho-analysts. Show me the prints left by St. Peter's feet in the stone and I cannot be sceptical. All these things seem to me to be a part of the riches of human history. If they have not a blue-book truth, they have a truth of a profounder kind, like the paintings of Fra Angelico. Christian and Pagan Rome alike—do they not contain half the poetry of the world? Till our own time, it was the capital of the European civilisation of the past. To-day, so far as Mussolini has his way, it is a suburb of the European decivilisation of the present.

One cannot help feeling grateful that one saw Italy in its sunny days before Fascists paraded the corridors of the railway trains and felt under the seats with their revolvers for concealed documents. The March on Rome had not yet taken place at the time of my first visit. Florence was plastered at the time with posters giving the names of Fascists who had been killed by Communists and of Communists who had been killed by Fascists; but the noises that sounded like pistol-shots in the streets at dawn every morning were made, not by revolutionaries, but by muleteers cracking their whips as they drove their wine-carts into the city. Italy was still a country in which to bask—a country of happy-looking people. When, I wonder, did the rot first set in that displaced the Italian smile with a scowl? Was the germ let loose by that curious figure, Signor Marinetti, generally regarded in this country as a comic character in the years before the last war? His Futurism was certainly rich in hatred of all for which Italy had hitherto stood in the hearts and imaginations of mankind. The great cities, Rome and Venice, he regarded as odious burial-places of the past calling for destruction. Art galleries and museums he loathed: he even declared war on macaroni. He proclaimed that the old Italy must die, and that a new Italy, worshipping force and brutality, must take its place. Strange that such crazy babble should have turned out to be prophetic. Only for a moment, however. The new Italy will give place to a newer Italy, and the old Italy that we knew and loved will still, like the Alps, be there.

Y. Y.

ERIN GO BLAGH

I believe this State is in immediate danger of invasion . . . which should be resisted by force.—J. M. Dillon, Opposition Leader, Dail, June 5th.

Eire: War strength, including trained reserves, 30,000.—Strengths and Resources of the Powers. (News Chronicle Pamphlet)

It's enough we've heard of Eire and the woes of her,
The old wild tales and the wrongs and the foes of her,
And she harping itself with the smoke of the peat in her eyes,
It's enough we know of the poetry and even the prose of her.

It's plenty we know of the holy soil she has
And the queenly lineage, ancient and royal she has,
And though what they say is absolute Erse to us,
We know of the old wise men in the Dail she has.

And now an invader will threaten maybe, they say,
Her watchers are watching the sky and the sea they say,
Till boats be rising full of Cuchulain's sons
And wings be dropping a crowd of the Sidh, they say.

And it's no human help she'll ask on the scene at all
But she'll jab at the strangers that intervene at all—
It's enough of old we have known of the Emerald Isle,
But we never have found her to be so green at all.

For it's well she knows who is plotting a dark design for her,
While she waits till the fairies be coming to hold the line for her,
And it's all my eye and Cathleen ni Houlihan
But may they arrive in time and may it keep fine for her.

SAGITTARIUS

SPRING NUMBER

At Shuttle and Weavers, a high-class drapery store in one of the largest towns in England, the women's dress department is a central hall on the first floor, with a high glass dome to it by way of a ceiling.

Glaring through this dome comes a species of dead platinum light, if such an expression may be used, and everything in the department shows up clearly. First and foremost the floor carpet, which is the colour of dry dust, and with a pattern of leaves marked all over it in the colour of wet dust. Next, the many metal stands and headless dummies standing about the department. These are wearing frocks and coats which are also coloured like dust—dust in varying degrees of dryness or of moisture. Some people maintain that a proportion of these dust-coloured garments are in fact yellows, blues, greens and even reds when looked closely into. But to continue. Next, behind glass panels in show-cases and in wardrobes, can be seen frocks of the colour of dead or dying flowers; as wilting hyacinths, faded primroses and sweet peas, or tulip leaves of the kind that may be seen lying at the bottom of waste paper baskets sometimes. Altogether it needs no Sherlock Holmes to understand that the whole place is in mourning for somebody, or something. And so it remains year after year.

The saleswomen who work in this high-class "Quality House," are, in their own phrase, an unusually nice type of person. They are filled with "Quality House" *esprit de corps*. Their manners also are excellent, because their hearts are kind.

An illustration of the last: in the dress department it sometimes happens that unpleasant things occur. Perhaps by some miscalculation a dress may turn up in the stock that smacks of Paris—that is of course—smacks of some sort of artistic education. Or, again, a new saleswoman may make her appearance in the department wearing foreign heels and a dress that fits and shows off her figure. It may be that the salesladies realise, on such occasions as these, that—shall we say a kind of gas has filtered into the building, which if permitted to percolate around in substantial quantities, might in the long run be capable of blowing the roof off the whole edifice.

At any rate it is very plain that when faced with things of this sort the saleswomen suffer. Yet they never give way to the painful feelings so occasioned. With a half glance at the offending object, they merely make a laughing comment—"There's a number for you!" Or simply, "What a number!" And so dismiss the outrage in a polite way that only those who are aware of their very genuine horror can appreciate.

One Saturday morning here, halfway through May, the "Warning bell" rang out loudly, announcing that it was ten minutes to one, and time to clear away. And O'Brien, a nervous looking Irish young woman with heavy black eyebrows, new, not only to the work at Shuttle and Weavers, but also to England, went over to the huge "bargain counter" in the centre, to help fold away the dresses.

At the bargain counter, where were a mass of customers, frocks, and saleswomen, she took up her place between three sales hands: Eileen, Irene, and Joan.

Irene was almost fair. Eileen was verging on "sandy." The latter was pressing ever more and more frocks into a drawer marked Q3 beneath the counter. On second thoughts it was these frocks that were verging on "sandy" rather than Eileen. And it was Eileen, in reality, who was almost fair, and not so much Irene, after all. Joan, a small gnat-like figure, not so fair, stood beside them. She was wearing a hair net. (Or not wearing a hair net—difficult to tell which.) She was holding out a frock which was patterned over with a tangled net of dead gnats or some such thing, and which had a general sandy looking tone about it, to a customer. This customer was inspecting the fastenings minutely. The customer's own fastenings were in the shape of tiny dog's heads, and a further tiny dog's head was on a string beside her, close above the carpet.

If they got these frocks folded up quickly, calculated O'Brien, in three-quarters of an hour she would be out in the middle of the Park, in the sun, eating her luncheon. She put out her hand and grabbed a frock close by—one of the gnat-webbed patterns—and began rapidly to fold it. "After you with me there!" said Joan's voice in surprise. It was Joan she had hold of, not a frock at all. Still in a hurry, and in order to hide her embarrassment, she made a dive at the floor, and started to pick up the odd dropped belts and buttons.

"Where is the box for buttons?" she called.

The girls all stared at her.

"Well! Where is the box for fastenings I ask?" she repeated, looking up at their expressionless faces.

"But that's not a fastening, dear—that's a customer's dog," said Irene quietly.

O'Brien shut her eyes tightly. After a moment she let the small dog fall, and ran away straight out of the department and into the staff lift with her face screwed up. Why, oh why, was it not more possible to distinguish the dresses from the people in this place? she wondered, as the lift whirled her down to the staff cloakroom. In Ireland she remembered no such difficulty. And although her "stock" was not all put away, she now felt she could not endure another minute inside Messrs. Shuttle and Weavers, that morning.

Once safely in the Park, she sat down on a bench overlooking a little ornamental garden that is kept as a sanctuary for water-fowl, and took out her sandwiches. In the sunlight to-day—the 16th May—this garden she fancied looked Oriental, Persian, in its new verdure. What flashing poisonous greens! What shocking pinks! There was certainly a tropical illumination in the air. . . . The very shadows sparkled and shimmered like Indian gauzes floating in, about, and among the flowers.

Cutting the turf into two in the garden here, lies a dark ribbon of still water. This mysterious canal comes from Heaven knows where, and disappears into a shadowy bower of overhanging fig leaves at the far end. To-day, above the fig leaves, and mixed with them, and shimmering through them and beyond them, was a bewildering tracery of bushes in full flower, pink geranium blossoms and wild roses predominating. On the opposite side of the canal, at the top of a steeply sloping bank, were four slender young beech trees. These stood there, seeming to be posing artificially in diverse exquisite attitudes, like a group of fastidious dancers who stand in the brilliant light awaiting their cue; their youthful trunks were powdered with white and silver, their green leafy sleeves floated out from their long arms in the wind in a myriad fidgeting flutings and convolutions.

Below them, beside the water, squatted a vast, uncouth, prehistoric-looking plant, a voluminous bunch of partially opened green umbrellas. A regular vegetable Megatherium, galumphing there upon the choice green velvet carpet. Two Chinese Mandarin ducks were holding a conversation beside it.

After a minute, one of these Mandarin ducks advanced towards the water. He trod with boldness and delicacy across the green luxuriant pile, his royal bosom swelled out tight as an egg, soft as a cloud. His arc-shaped blade of gorgeous ginger rose up like a rainbow from his shoulder to his forehead, his black eyes were wet as currants in the rain, and the twisted antlers of his tail were all unfurled—spraying coral-ferns of red and ginger, fiery fragments—some still fiercely burning, some ruinously scorched. Upon his porcelain shoulders a mantle of snowflakes seemed finely sprinkled. The virgin white of his stomach was scarred with four black jagged bars, lightning strokes of some unknown demon's branding.

On reaching the canal he stopped. He preened his breast; then stared into the water, twisting this way and that. Next he started snapping lightly at his ankles and at his tail feathers, and then—the easier to peck at the fleas—he unfurled his wings and spread them out wide. And behold! The undersides glowed like the pink evening sunlight upon the snow fields.

The canal water, though thick with mud and the colour of a toad's back, mirrored the garden scene clearly. And in it could be seen the Mandarin duck's companion in the background, sidling unobtrusively along the bank, to where the waters darkened over with shadows and slid in underneath the screening fig leaves. At this moment the big, flat grey head of a water-crane reared up from behind a bush. This bird had been standing there on one leg, unobserved, for some time. The silvery needle-shaped leaves where he lurked successfully camouflaged him, for they were the same mist colour as his plumage. With sharply turned head and unwinking eye, he carefully marked the progress of the retreating Mandarin, about whom there was certainly a something purposeful yet veiled, as he tiptoed towards the leafy alcove. Cautiously the crane took a step out, emerged from the misty fountain of leaves, and stood upon the green grass, again upon one leg only, and stared at the retreating duck. There was a bloom hovering over this grey bird's plumage resembling the moonlit powdery bloom on an untouched grape. Or the opal glittering of an iceberg through the lilac heat haze on some summer sea. And this rather unearthly looking bloom, together with his top-heavy bulk on his one long leg, and most of all the passionate and lugubrious concentration on the gaudy departing ducklet in the distance, seemed to make of him a species of moonlit clown, standing far away and alone there in that opulent and festive scene.

O'Brien finished her sandwiches and gave a last look round at the ornamental garden. Even in the short time she had been there the sun had shifted, the shadows were longer, the airs of summer seemed more rich and more languorous. A network of tiny twig shadows lay lightly over the pink geraniums and wild roses, and under its folds upon the grass, some town sparrows and two or three rabbits, speckled and unkempt, hopped placidly about. And she noticed that close by her feet, also, something was happening. A crowd of restless pigeons were wheeling about over the gravel pathway, this way, and then that way . . . what a flutteration! The large males, with their puffed out breasts thrust forward boastfully, were pursuing the scurrying females, and bouncing, sweeping, gliding after them across the grass like buoyant pleasure boats whose sails filled out with the strong winds of summer race them full tilt across the waters half uplifted into the air. Each time the females dodged, as they would at the last minute, the males alighted on the grass as dainty as thistle-down, with tails strangely humped, and blades all unfurled in an open fan and stretched out taut and quivering. Their yellow eyes blazed. Their bodies vibrated all over, and released the flashing iridescent fires of desire and combat from off their new spring plumage.

A month ago when she came here, O'Brien remembered, there was nothing in this garden but dust-coloured twigs; pigeons dull, constricted, and unambitious; coldness; and death. But since that day, it needed no Sherlock Holmes to see—something else had entered the garden. Something had come in and taken possession. Had changed the place into something new and totally different.

What was it? And where had it come from?

Where?

JULIA STRACHEY

VICTOR PASMORE

WHATEVER their occupations and preoccupations, lovers of painting should endeavour to visit this exhibition at the Wildenstein Gallery (147 New Bond Street). For one thing, it will help them to measure the depth of their sensibility. A work of art—a poem, a picture or a piece of music—should be capable of taking us out of our circumstances, out of this world of our sorrow, and putting us into a world where æsthetic values alone exist. Failure implies either that the work of art lacks intensity or that the amateur lacks sensibility. Without being great masterpieces, these pictures by Pasmore have quality enough to call out the visitor's appreciative powers and make him forget for an hour the things he reads about in the papers and hears of on the wireless. So let him make the test.

Most of these four and thirty canvases are recent, but one is dated as early as 1926 and another is dated 1930, so the exhibition is to some extent a record of the artist's development. It pays tribute to his masters—Renoir and Degas, Bonnard and Sickert—all of whom he has studied profitably. Also it marks a pause; which may lead some critics to judge that the time has come for Pasmore to move on from the field of which he is master and attack more complicated problems. He has already established himself as the English colourist of his generation; and this not only, nor chiefly, because he can use gay colours gaily, but because he relates tones subtly: let *The Man in a Bowler Hat* (1938) and the early Chardinesque *Still Life* be my witnesses. Perhaps he should now begin to dig deeper into his temperament and give us more of himself.

That Pasmore has a genuine artistic temperament is certain. This exhibition reveals it. Despite the fact that in all the pictures—except the very earliest—the same method has been employed, the effect is not monotonous. That is because each picture is, not an exercise in a technique nor the exploitation of a manner, but the record of a particular experience. The fact that both method and temper happen to be of a kind to give pleasure to amateurs and collectors is a bit of good luck for the painter and of no further consequence; always provided, of course, that the painter be an artist. Here that question does not arise: it would be unnatural, impossible perhaps, for Pasmore to exploit his advantages for commercial ends, to flatter the snobs, or make the pressmen stare.

A more intelligent criticism would be that the artist does not push his pictures far enough, that essentially as well as superficially they are unfinished. Here, it seems to me, we are on delicate ground. Inconclusiveness may well be a characteristic of Pasmore's talent; in which case, to urge him to push his pictures further, would be to give absurd advice. Rightly he refuses to express more than he feels, and what he feels for what he sees may be evanescent and fragmentary. Certainly, if, by exerting all his powers and straining them to the limit of endurance, he can win and hold a more substantial and complete sense of the *motif*, he will have made himself a greater artist. But the prime fact, the fact which gives him his considerable importance, is that he is a genuine artist; and no genuine artist will pretend to express what he does not feel because he, or anyone else, thinks that he ought to feel it.

CLIVE BELL

MUSSOLINI

THIS pinchbeck Caesar aping the sublime
To Nero now for inspiration turns,
And, from the Teuton leader taking time,
Plays second fiddle while his country burns.

G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Peaceful Inn," at the Duke of York's

The Inn, "somewhere on Dartmoor," had been burnt out exactly a year ago; but there it still was, a very solid ghost inn, and who among the evening's chance arrivals would have guessed? But the magazines and the hall calendar were a year out, and that roused suspicions (more quickly, of course, among the audience than on the stage; in this sort of play the audience always leads). Then the story is fitted together piece by piece, and we discover that the night of the fire is to be repeated; there are six guests now as there were then; and they, too, will perish. There is a flurry round to escape; but doors are locked, there are no ladders to let down from an upstairs window. Why not smash the wide casements which have been facing us across the hotel lounge for two acts? No one even thinks of it, because they are off on quite another trail. They are all there, strangers to one another, for a higher purpose; each has reached a breaking point in his or her life, the dark young man in a lounge suit turns out to be a clergyman, and a round of confessions follow. Perhaps Providence means to give them another chance? The rich butterfly will become a busy bee, the woman journalist will go back to her task of answering correspondents with fresh heart, the clergyman will regain his faith, and so on. Providence, after some exciting by-play, turns up trumps, the door is miraculously unlocked, the Dartmoor mist lifts, and everyone goes out in the light of a new dawn. As they look back the Inn sinks once more into a gutted ruin. Well, well, for those who prefer their thrillers pi., there we are; and the play really twists and teases a little. The acting is almost too good: Mr. Stephen Haggard, Miss Louise Hampton, especially, belong to another world of the theatre.

"Come Out of Your Shell," at the Criterion

After a slow beginning this new intimate revue proved to have the qualities necessary for its kind—speed, gaiety and point. Miss Magda Kun is the star of a show which depends less upon individuals than on concerted efforts. But her conquest, whether dancing, singing or miming, is complete; her Pinocchio is a delightful solo, and in the ensembles she adds just the right finishing touches. By contrast with her infectious warmth Miss Nadine Marsh delivers her pointed lines with a particularly deft sharpness which makes them very effective. The male comedians are no less well matched. Mr. Frank Pettingel, florid and flamboyant—at his best as the last of the Principal Boys; Mr. Hyde Wright quietly fatuous—at his best as a Minister at the Microphone. Miss Greta Gynt danced and sang prettily. Miss Annette Mills (who wrote *Boomps-a-Daisy*) sang some of her own songs in her own style—a kind of "swung" Edwardianism. Only two of the sketches failed, and the longest were also the best, the Televised French Lesson and the Weight-lifting Troupe. Altogether lively, bright and moderately sophisticated.

"Between Two Wars," at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green

Painting and Sculpture, at Messrs. Peter Jones's

Watercolours, at Messrs. Selfridge's

The exhibition at Marx House is full of good things: the "effete art of the decadent bourgeoisie" (as they say in Moscow) provides most of the material, and ideology becomes explicit chiefly in a large symbolical canvas by Mr. Nevinson. Rouault's *Soldier*, Sickert's *Beribboned Washstand*, and a drawing by Braque are the high points of the show. Other artists represented include John Banting, Vanessa Bell, Graham Bell, Quentin Bell, Gertler, Grant, Frances Hodgkins, John, Paul Klee, Henry Moore, John and Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, Orozco, John Piper, Claude Rogers, Matthew Smith, Stanley Spencer, Wilson Steer and Elizabeth Watson. The value of taking good work to other districts than the West End is very great. Most of the pictures are for sale for the benefit of Marx House.

The directors of Messrs. Peter Jones have had the excellent idea of showing to their customers a collection of works of art, most of which are pleasant and honourable objects, moderately priced. Babette Lydal, Henry Cogle, Sylvia Marshall, Vincent Stuart, Juan Stoll and Arnold Mason contribute skilful and tasteful paintings. The exhibition sets an excellent example, and it is to be hoped that Messrs. Peter Jones will be encouraged to make such exhibitions a permanent feature of their store.

At Selfridge's, under the high-sounding name "New Grosvenor Gallery," there is a room of water-colours, mostly belonging to the Burlington House tradition. Miss Margaret Fisher Prout is the exhibitor most likely to interest an educated taste.

THE COMING WEEK

SUNDAY, June 16th—

Prof. J. C. Flugel: "Dual Personality," Conway Hall, 11.

MONDAY, June 17th—

Exhibition of Agnes Strickland's Portraits, Letters and other Souvenirs, in aid of British Red Cross Fund. Bumpus's Bookshop, 477 Oxford Street.

Poetry Recital in aid of Red Cross Fund, Central Hall, 1.15.

Fabian International Affairs Group Meeting, a Speaker from the Ministry of Information on British Propaganda Abroad, 12 Gt. Newport Street, 7.45.

"Federal Union and the War," Olaf Stapledon and Miss F. L. Josephy, Conway Hall, 8.

TUESDAY, June 18th—

China Campaign Committee Lunch, Andrew Rothstein: "The Soviet Union and China," Ley On's Chop Suey Rest., 72 Wardour Street, W.1, 1. Tickets 2s. 6d.

Fredk. J. Tritton: "The World Organisation of the Society of Friends," Friends House, 1.20.

Sir Richard Acland: "Our Struggle," Box Church, Cheapside, 1.25.

Festival of English and French Music, Marguerite Long and Phillippe Gaubert, Queens Hall, 8. Other concerts June 25th, July 2nd and 9th.

Michael Redgrave in "Thunder Rock," Neighbourhood Theatre, Harrington Street, S.W.7.

WEDNESDAY, June 19th—

Fabian Society Lunch, M. Hanck (Labour Attaché French Ministry of Information): "French Labour Movement," Royal Hotel, 1. Tickets 2s. 6d.

Hon. George Peel: "The French Colonial Empire," Institut Français, 5.

Oliver Gollancz: "Britain's Contribution to European Reconstruction," Dick Sheppard Centre, 8.

Festival of English and French Music, Myra Hess and Roy Henderson, National Gallery, 8. Other concerts June 21st, 26th, 28th and July 3rd and 5th.

THURSDAY, June 20th—

Vera Brittain: "The Works of Winifred Holtby," New Times Bookshop, 64 Farringdon Street (off Ludgate Circus) 3.

Ballet Rambert and London Ballet. Anglo-French programme of favourite ballets. Arts Theatre Club. And on June 22nd, 27th and 29th.

FRIDAY, June 21st—

Ballet Première: "Peter and the Wolf," by Frank Staff, Arts Theatre Club.

Correspondence

GERMAN TRADE UNIONISTS IN ENGLAND

SIR,—The free German Trade Unionists, living in this country as refugees, have always felt it their duty to do everything in their power to help in the struggle for the destruction of National Socialism. Our group, representing the free German Trade Unions in this country has been formed with the approval of the International Federation of Trade Unions and the British Trade Union Congress. It numbers 103 persons. Many of them have worked for years in the illegal underground Anti-Nazi movement in Germany. All these people have detailed knowledge of the Nazi system and its many vulnerable points. It can only be in the interest of all enemies of the Nazi system, and it will be of paramount importance for the strengthening of all fronts of a total war, if their experience and knowledge is fully exploited.

We have read with interest the statement of the Rt. Hon. Duff Cooper, made on May 28th in the House of Commons, in which he declared that:

> . . . there were important elements in Germany who had no sympathy with the present regime or with the crimes committed by Hitler. He would do his best to convey to them our views and encourage them. . . .

Likewise, we are of the opinion, that the following points raised recently in the press, cover absolutely the present situation:

> We have within our borders tens of thousands of "aliens," made up of Germans, Austrians, Poles, Czechs. They are our natural allies, and the best instruments for purposes indispensable for victory. They have lived on the roads which one day our tanks must travel, know fields where our aeroplanes must land; know which men in this and that village or town have deep if secret hatred for the Nazis; have sometimes helped to build the very tanks which now crash through our defences. And, for the most part, we completely refuse to let them help us.
>
> This does not mean that enemy aliens should simply be set at liberty again. What we should do is clear. We should set up a commission. Let there be three Britons on it and three Germans, whom our Government know and can trust.
>
> Let them go through the cases of all enemy aliens. Let them find out how each man can best be used in the struggle against Hitler. Some will undoubtedly still have to be interned. Many—especially chemists, scientists and technicians—can be usefully employed under supervision. Some, it may be, will volunteer for the most dangerous task of all—to make their way back to Nazi Germany, and act as our allies inside our enemy's country.

We, who had to emigrate for political reasons and because of our active fight against National Socialism, understand fully the gravity of the present situation and the serious implications of this struggle. Therefore we also know, that not a single useful individual should be wasted and that every man and woman ought to be put in the right place. We are aware of the fact, that all refugees, including those registered on our lists, ought to be carefully examined as to their reliability. But those who have been found absolutely reliable could be of essential help to the success of the cause.

Our collaborators come from all parts of Germany, they were employed in or had connections with the different branches of industry. Their active struggle against Hitler furnished them with information on matters of military, political and economical significance. It could be of vital importance, if this inside knowledge could be fully utilised.

For the direct and indirect propaganda to Germany two things are necessary: an exact knowledge of the inner-German Anti-Nazi-front and its secret connections and the impressive and easily understandable formulation of propaganda texts, which are sent out either by wireless, as pamphlets or through other channels. It may be a deciding factor to be able to keep up and to re-establish old broken connections to those inner-German centres of resistance. It is an essential part of the present-day total warfare to encourage these natural Allies of Britain and France and to prepare further ground through a generous propaganda-campaign. Just

as certainly as the Nazis prepare their military successes by fifth columns, will their downfall inside Germany be prepared by that other Germany.

HANS GOTTFURCHT,
For the German Trade-Unionists in London.

SPY-MANIA

SIR,—After reading your warning against spy mania in the Critic's Diary, I should like to mention my own experience last week-end. I was staying in an hotel in Oxford, sitting in the lounge after dinner waiting for a trunk call to go through. There was much delay on the line, and by a quarter past eleven I was the only person in the lounge except for a convivial group of officers of the B.E.F. A Military Police officer came over and asked me for my identity card. "You seem very interested in our conversation," he said. I said I wasn't, but was waiting for a telephone call and then produced my damning document, which was not an identity card, but a receipt for my application for one from the local registration office, the original having been returned to the head office in error. "Irish, eh," said the officer, "how long have you been in England?" I said I was born, brought up, and resident in this country. "Have you any other means of identification?" "Yes—a passport." "Let me see it." I fetched my passport. "This passport was issued in Vienna." "Yes." "Why?" "There was no more room in my old passport, whose number is given in the present one." "I see you got this in August, 1937. *A very short time before Hitler moved into Austria.*" "Not very short." "*A matter of months.*" At this moment my call came through. After I had telephoned, the officer said, "Go to your room and wait there." I was now reduced to the state of guilty pulp which is natural to anyone who has ever been under the prefect system. I waited, wondering what the charge would be when the officer and another entered, followed by no less than eight policemen. I sat sweating on my bed while the inspector said: "Good evening, sir, I understand you are an Austrian." The passport was again examined, and we then dealt with the question of paternity (my father was an officer in the British army) and occupation. I explained that I edited a literary magazine and produced a copy. "You are responsible for the nature and selection of its contents?" "Yes." A policeman then handed the copy to another with the remark, "Nude figures." I said the plate was a reproduction of a Burne Jones. "Something like Epstein or Einstein," said the policeman. The officer said that he had just come from Belgium and seen a lot of this kind of business, that in France lack of identity card meant only one thing, and that he thought I should be put in the Coop for the night. The inspector asked if he could search my luggage. I mentioned several people I knew in Oxford and asked the inspector to ring them up. It then transpired I had been at Oxford—and at Eton. "Eton," the officer was incredulous. "What house?" The atmosphere became more cordial, and soon after the Forces left. A junior officer explained that had I possessed a proper identity card (instead of a receipt for one, a passport, and a ration book) there would have been no investigation. Outside my room I heard the officer protesting to the inspector, "You mean to say you've no charge against him, you can't even put him in the Coop for the night—what's the good of us fellows doing our job if you won't back us up?" Next morning a detective called at my London address, said he had been informed I had "been talking very indiscreetly to some soldiers," and mustn't do it again. So much for the incident. There are several conclusions to be drawn from it. (1) The police were both polite and efficient and accepted the identity card receipt as valid; they seemed well able to deal with the situation and others like it. (2) The officer was both arrogant and bigoted. It was clear that to him any writer was suspect, and an Irish name and British passport issued in Vienna were themes to which he returned continually. Any officer may demand one's identity card (which in any case identifies almost nothing) and it is clear that there will be many more cases of confusion. I couldn't help feeling that if the group of officers in the lounge had not been indiscreet, they would not have fallen on the solitary civilian (though I did not hear a word of their conversation.) The most sinister point was the importance attached to my having been at Eton. As Brixton prison may now contain Etonians it is clear that such a fact can have no immediate bearing on a case. The Old School Tie should count for nothing. If we are going to be held up all the time and asked to prove who we are and what we do, we must be questioned by the politically educated. The police have the efficiency, the army the authority, but who has the knowledge? Who knows the difference between a Socialist and a Communist, a writer and an agitator, who knows not only which are the official Fifth Column bodies, but which are the strata in which they develop, the cultures in which the bacillus flourishes? We should have either new special constables for dealing immediately and all over the country with such cases, or else political education for the local police. There is even a sadder moral to be drawn. Granted that my tormentor had been through a bad time in Flanders, his bullying reflected the intolerance which is developing in the military mind against aspects of British life with which they are unfamiliar. The gulf between the soldier and the civilian is widening, and should be bridged, for on that bridge depends the solidarity of England which, unless it becomes a fighting democracy in which the culture of the civil life and the courage and discipline of the military mutually fortify each other, must degenerate, and there will be just another philistine country under martial law.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

REFUGEES

SIR,—I have been informed by an Austrian Jewish refugee, at present housekeeper to my father in Edinburgh, that her son and some other young German Jews from Whittinghame, who have been interned as a result of recent events, have been put into the same camp with Nazi German prisoners.

Now I am aware that it cannot have been easy to find camps for all the Jewish refugees in this country, and that they, like ourselves, must expect to suffer in such difficult times. I am also aware that our rulers did, for a long time, refuse to recognise the sufferings that German Jews were exposed to during the years before the war, and still are exposed to in Germany, and thus they probably do not quite appreciate what the Jewish feeling for Nazi Germany is, nor with what contempt they are regarded by Hitler's disciples. But in spite of all this, it does seem as brutal as it is stupid to put refugees from Nazi oppression into the same camps as Nazis. It is not that I expect these prisoners will be given the opportunity actively to ill-treat the Jews. It is that the Jews, who had at last escaped to a better atmosphere, are deliberately being put back into the old atmosphere of hatred and contempt. And that surely is worse to endure than physical ill-treatment.

Ever since the internment of aliens began, I have been assuring people here that certainly our rulers, who are Englishmen, would never allow such a thing to happen. Now that I know they have, I feel that public attention ought to be drawn to the fact.

Park Street, Woodstock, FLORA GRIERSON
Oxford.

BEARDS IN WARTIME

SIR,—I suppose the growth of a beard gives an Englishman a slightly foreign appearance. If that is so then no foreign agent working against this country would give himself away by wearing one.

I have a beard. For the second time since the war began I have been stopped by the police and asked who I am, etc. Everybody is suspect in wartime, I know, and mere silliness has the time of its life—the ordinary members of the Police Force are characterised by their lack of imagination—but I did feel, after having been taken ignominiously to the police station—where my statements were verified—that instead of a laconic "O.K." I was entitled to at least an expression of mild apology, to smooth over an unsettling incident and a stupid blunder. ERNEST AUSTEN PAULEY

Alderwood House,
Newbury.

MR. DUFF COOPER AND CAPORETTO

SIR,—Many must have listened in acute discomfort to Mr. Duff Cooper's reference to Caporetto. It is unfortunate that this hasty speech, and not Mr. Attlee's speech in the House of Commons, was the first British comment to the world on Mussolini's crime. But apart from its taste and temper, what could be more unwise than to wound, not Fascist pride, but Italian pride, by recalling Caporetto? Nothing surely could suit Mussolini better. To taunt with cowardice the people that has produced, and still produces as we have good reason to know in this country, men of heroic spirit, because an army of ill-fed peasants broke at Caporetto is the very way to help him to whip up passion. It is the very way also to hinder those who oppose him, including the Pope, whose noble defence of liberty is ill-repaid by such injustice to his Italian blood. Few speakers can emulate the superb dignity of the Prime Minister's great speech in the House of Commons, but they can all learn from it.

J. L. HAMMOND

THE TRAGEDY OF BELGIUM

SIR,—I fail to understand the comfort which your "Belgian Correspondent" may have found in writing the article, under this title, which appeared in your last issue. English readers know, from their own experience, that a "Saxe Coburg origin" does not imply a lack of loyalty or patriotism and that no constitutional Sovereign could possibly impose his personal policy on a reluctant people. As a Belgian, your correspondent should have remembered that King Leopold's speech to his Cabinet, in October, 1936, was made not "when Hitler tore up the Locarno Treaty," but six months later, and that it was published at the suggestion of M. Vandervelde, the Socialist leader. Your correspondent ignores the fact that the policy of "independent neutrality" was prompted by the necessity of obtaining from a reluctant Parliament urgent military measures, and that it was sanctioned by the British and French Governments in a formal Declaration issued in April, 1937. The negotiations which led to this Declaration were started, not by M. Spaak, whom your correspondent criticises, but by M. van Zeeland, whom he admires. With regard to the command of the army, every Belgian schoolboy knows that this is not a matter left to the caprice of the Sovereign, but one of his most essential constitutional duties.

Since your readers have been given so many unfounded statements embellished with legends and rumours, may I claim your hospitality for drawing their attention to a few indisputable facts.

1. The policy of 1936–1937 was the indispensable condition of Belgian rearmament. The Belgian Government—King and Ministers—as well as the Allies, had to choose between a divided and badly protected Belgium and a united Belgium, ready to make every sacrifice for her defence.

2. Neither during the pre-war years, nor during the eight months before the invasion, nor during the first days of the struggle, was there any divergence of view between the Sovereign and his Ministers representing a large majority of the electorate concerning the attitude of the country in the conflict and the measures to be taken for her defence in case of attack.

3. M. Pierlot and his colleagues have now assumed the responsibilities of leadership in agreement with France and Great Britain.

Your correspondent seems to distrust this leadership. Does he sincerely believe that he is helping his country in trying to undermine its authority at the present moment? If this gentleman honours me with an answer, I should be glad if he would honour me also with his signature.

EMILE CAMMAERTS

DAY OF PRAYER

SIR,—"Critic's" remarks on the value of prayer in your current issue are thought-provoking, and I think that many Anglican clergy would agree with him in condemning as unchristian certain crude ideas about intercession. We clergy were certainly amazed at the huge crowds which thronged our parish churches on Sunday, May 26th, and we wondered what purpose was in their minds. Did they come to ask that their own dear ones might be kept safe? Or was it just loyalty to the King's appeal and the herd instinct? Perhaps many felt, "Well, it can't do any harm, anyway." Your readers may be interested to know the true Christian attitude to prayer.

Surely for people who believe in God, the purpose of prayer is to realise the Presence of God and to enter into communion with Him. As Christians,

we believe that God is personal, and cares for His children. To suggest that God is too exalted to trouble about us is to degrade the idea of God—we do not admire a man who has no love for those who depend on him. Further, because we assert that God is personal, we can believe that He has a plan for this world. His purposes are frustrated now by the sins of men to whom He has given free will, but like the master chess player He is certain to win in the end. In prayer we seek to realise the Will of God in any given situation and to bring our own wills into line with His Will. This must involve penitence for our past blindness and weakness, and the determination to live less selfishly in the future. The value of prayer consists in the reassuring strength it brings that "though the cause of evil prosper, yet 'tis truth alone is strong." True Christian prayer should be inspired with the spirit of Jesus in the garden facing the cross—a prayer that we may be loyal, not a funk prayer for safety.

7 Browning Road, C. P. GOSLIN
Stoke, Coventry.

SIR,—I doubt whether you have got this prayer business quite right even now. You say that it is "unchristian to suggest that there is a Providence that will save British soldiers from German guns because prayers are offered for them, and reject the equally sincere prayers for German soldiers."

But isn't the justice of the cause a relevant factor as well as the sincerity of the prayer? In the interests of Christianity as well as of the world in general, we believe it to be desirable that the British soldier should succeed and that the German soldier should fail; and I can see nothing unchristian in hoping, and indeed expecting, that a Christian Providence will tend to grant the prayers offered for British soldiers and reject the other kind.

If the sincerity of the prayer-offerer were the only criterion, Providence might feel compelled to give equal support to the good and the bad cause, or even to give greater support to the bad cause than to the good. Surely no universe could be run on such lines! GEORGE A. FALK
7 Sion Hill, Clifton, Bristol

SIR,—May I ask your correspondent, Mr. Punshon, a question?

What of the millions of heartbreaking prayers poured out before God from the stricken masses of Poland, Holland and Belgium as they fell mutilated by the wayside, or saw a similar fate overtake their loved ones?

Were they unheard? Does God have a special regard for the English? Did they need the purification of suffering even more than us?

Or was it that we had the Navy and the R.A.F., while they—the tragic witness to a hard truth—they had only their prayers?

18 Lime Hill Road, JAMES TATUM
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

SIR,—*All prayer* is nugatory unless they who pray are "tuned-in" to Truth. The "wave-length" must be exactly adjusted, for the slightest deviation makes the attempt at transmission quite inoperative and therefore useless. J. H. SYMONS
7 Winchelsea Court,
Worthing.

FASCISM OR SOCIALISM?

SIR,—You talk an immense amount of nonsense about the men composing the late Government. Whatever we may feel about Mr. Chamberlain, he did two things for which all sensible people in the country are grateful to him.

He gained a respite of a year at Munich which enabled us at any rate to make a start in reorganising our fighting forces. He had the courage to eat his words and bring in conscription.

Don't imagine that the English forget how the Socialists, including Attlee, Greenwood and all that gang, consistently opposed all attempts to rearm. It is a good thing to have all parties in the Government at this time of crisis. But don't imagine that we forget the record of the Socialists.

Don't imagine either that the very large middle class in England, who will patiently submit to any government control in order to win the war, are prepared to accept the Socialist nostrum when peace returns. No thanks, of two evils choose the lesser; Fascism before Socialism. A. M. DALE, Captain
Ivon House,
Broad Chalke, Wilts.

[This is a revealing letter. On one point we must correct Capt. Dale. The Labour leaders did not oppose necessary rearmament, they made support conditional on a foreign policy which would have saved us from our present calamities. The desperate situation that now confronts us is due to a calamitous policy and to the fact that even after this policy was changed, even after the war had begun, the Chamberlain government continued to drift on with the old profit system substantially unchanged.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

MAN THE RAMPARTS

SIR,—While agreeing in the main with Mr. Gilchrist's letter I do not think he is justified in claiming to speak for the two thousand odd ex-members of the International Brigades in this country, since not more than seventy were present at the Association's last meeting. Such an attitude is too reminiscent of the Manifesto sent home from the Jarama front beginning "We, the seven hundred members of the British Battalion, . . ." which was seen by not more than a dozen of the hundred and fifty men who represented the total strength of the battalion at the time.

If, as has been constantly repeated, the International Brigades were composed of men of all classes, and all shades of opinion, united in a common fight against Spanish, Italian and German Fascism, for the preservation of democracy, it is obviously impossible for the policy of one political party to represent their collective political views, and the statement "We shall continue to oppose this war, whatever the composition of the Government, while the class at present in power remains there . . ." can only rank as a personal opinion, completely at variance with the acceptance in Spain, without demur, of the appointment in many places of the former owners as salaried managers of their own concerns, and of such officers as remained nominally loyal, to commands.

My impression is that, like myself, most ex-Internationals, while unable to support any government incorporating such non-interventionists as Chamberlain, would be glad to have another crack at Franco, with or without official backing, if the chance offered. WILLIAM DAY
Three Bridges.

THIS ENGLAND

SIR,—In the "This England" column of your issue of June 8th is published a paragraph, at the end of which appear the words—*Oxford Mail.* It purports, therefore, to give the opinion of the *Oxford Mail*, although a prolonged search of our leading articles has failed to reveal any such expression of opinion. CHARLES FENBY,
Oxford Mail, Oxford. Editor

[The extract came from a letter in the correspondence columns of the *Oxford Mail.* We apologise for the accidental omission of the distinction we are usually careful to make between the opinions of a paper and of its correspondents. We should certainly be annoyed to have the opinions of our correspondents foisted on us.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

CHRISTIAN VERSE

SIR,—I read with great interest the brilliant review of the *Oxford Book of Christian Verse.* I was appalled to discover to what depths of prejudice so cultured and sagacious an Armenian as Lord David Cecil can be led. To him, it appears, Christian Verse must be High Anglican or Roman in outlook to attain eternal merit. Even Milton, whose grandeur of mind was above the doctrinal brawls of Laud and his opponents, is dubbed "not essentially a religious poet." Whatever we may think of his theology, *Paradise Lost* is permeated with the zeal of a religious mind. Further, the sonnets—especially the political sonnets—have an almost divine fire in their call to aid the distressed (e.g. the Late Massacre in Piedmont; The New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament).

The violence of either Lord David Cecil or Mr. Mortimer in attacking the Protestant verses of the eighteenth century is at once saddening and infuriating to one who believes that differences among Christians may one day end in Reunion. The verses of Watts and Wesley were written with the clear aim of leading the people to Christ, when the Churches were corrupt and empty.

His dying crimson like a robe
Spreads o'er his body, on the tree
And I am dead to all the globe
And all the globe is dead to me.

Is this more rhetorical than the lovely poem of Sherburne, "The proud Aegyptian Queen, her Roman Guest . . ."?

The myth of Protestant antipathy to art appears to die hard. Admittedly Roman and High Anglican services are more beautiful externally than the apostolic simplicity of Calvinistic worship, but the statement that the doctrine of Grace is hostile to poetry is not merely inaccurate but incredibly misleading. The fact that our righteousness is as filthy rags does not mean that the visible world, which God has created, is also foul with sin. Nature is not necessarily fallen in the same theological sense as man.

The chief energies of the Genevan poets were devoted admittedly to paraphrases of the Psalms, but this vitally religious aspect of Verse seems to have altogether escaped the notice of either Lord David Cecil or Mr. Mortimer or both. Admittedly, "All people that on earth do dwell" is inferior to much of Vaughan's work, but it has the merit that the aim of the writer was to "praise God and glorify His name for ever" whereas one suspects that Vaughan had other and less lofty aims. The Metaphysical poets seem to have made no attempt to appeal to more than a small intellectual clique, whereas the paraphrasers, whether of Geneva or Edinburgh, sought the ears of the elect in all lands. This seems to me the criterion of Christian verse—does it aim at giving pleasure to a few or leading the many to Christ? We can be glad that both kinds of poetry exist but surely the more religious concept is the propagandist one rather than the intellectual.

Emmanuel College, F. E. PEACH
Cambridge.

FORECASTS OF FASCISM

SIR,—In his review of Jack London's *The Iron Heel* Mr. Crossman quotes an extract forecasting Fascism as "one of the most astounding prophecies in history."

There is, however, an even more astounding one. *The Iron Heel* was published in 1907. Writing in 1890 in *News from Nowhere*, William Morris penned the following extract:

> Whatever the Government might do, a great part of the middle and upper classes were determined to set on foot a counter revolution; for the Communism that now loomed ahead seemed quite unendurable to them. Bands of young men, like the marauders in the great strike of whom I told you just now, armed themselves and drilled, and began on any opportunity or pretence to skirmish with the people in the streets. The Government neither helped them nor put them down, but stood by, hoping that something might come of it. These "Friends of Order," as they were called, had some successes at first, and grew bolder; they got many officers of the regular army to help them, and by their means laid hold of munitions of war of all kinds. One part of their tactics consisted in their guarding and even garrisoning the big factories of the period. . . . A sort of irregular war was carried on with varied successes all over the country; and at last the Government, which at first pretended to ignore the struggle, or treat it as mere rioting, definitely declared for "the Friends of Order" and joined to their band whatsoever of the regular army they could get together, and made a desperate effort to overwhelm "the rebels," as they now once more called, and as indeed they called themselves.

It seems that if we read more widely various political developments would cause us less confusion and surprise. LEONORA GREGORY
37 Gower Street, W.C.1.

THE *N.S.* AND THE TROOPS

SIR,—A few months ago, as the result of correspondence in the *N.S.*, I received a large number of offers from readers to send their used copy to a man at the Front. I had fewer requests than offers, and some offers were not taken advantage of.

As readers will have known, the addresses sent no longer stand, and, moreover, postal matter other than letters is not received for troops overseas.

There are, however, many men at rest camps all over the kingdom who would gladly receive used copies. T. ARTHUR LEONARD
Wayside, Sychnant Pass Road,
Conway, N. Wales.

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

SOCIETY lags behind its writers and takes sometimes a generation to catch up with them. It is a fact, for example, that although two wars stand between us and everything Mr. Somerset Maugham has to say, he is established as one of the most distinguished and most readable of the older writers. Accomplishment has always been sneered at in English letters and readability has become a sneer too; yet these two qualities, cultivated with an unequalled scrupulousness by Mr. Maugham, have at last made their impression. By them and by the combination of bitterness and tolerance (or, in his lower manner, cynicism and *laissez faire*), he has managed to convince an enormous public which has grown more and more embittered, disillusioned, tolerant and even frivolous, that he is their man, the tailor's mirror of the moment. And, since society lags, so to a great extent, he is. He has also had luck. The last forty years of the English novel have seen an enormous and optimistic social preoccupation, a cheerful, complacent or sensitive dismembering of tabus which released the individual. The present war has, on the short view, dashed all that and Maugham, the sceptic, who would have nothing to do with it all either as politics or belief, survives among the wreckage of public Utopias and private sensibilities. At least, one of the two Maughams survives; the other, in dinner jacket and holding the Ritzy cocktail, looks rather tawdry, like that *crème de menthe* spattered dress suit at the surrealist exhibition.

Novelists have a multiple personality in their work and a dual personality in their profession. In the latter they divide simply into God and Mammon. Maugham begins as the austere, impersonal, sceptical, and even pitying God, walking among men and women, and watching them sedulously creating their misery and illusions. Tired of walking he takes a seat at the café and, comfortable, finds scepticism become cynicism, austerity become chic, pity becoming the indulgence of the man of the world, morality a trick. He plays Iago to humanity's bellowing Othello and, disdaining disorderliness and anarchy, as Iago did, he creates an imaginary human being, an efficient, orderly, removed and sensible one, who has put money in his purse and has learned to live in a world of illusion without illusions. Iago, after all, was a very civilised man, cruel no doubt and probably frustrated, but a great deal pleasanter to live with than the rhetorical Moor.

Writers do not commonly add anything new to the ideas which dominated them in their twenties. The Maugham strain can be found in his contemporaries—Shaw, Kipling and Galsworthy—in the former two particularly. Writers were reacting to the new financiers' British Empire, the gentleman myth, the aestheticism of the decade, and all attacking sexual tabus and convention. To the modern reader the words "gentleman" and "convention" seem an obsession in Maugham and Shaw; Shaw is all for tearing up the Empire, Kipling for expanding it until it becomes mystical; Maugham succeeds him as the debunker of the white man's burden which usually turns out to be his wife's adultery. Maugham is Kipling turned inside out, discovering alcohol, beachcombing and middle-class sex, where Kipling portrayed the Roman overlord and evoked the secret, savage hierarchy of the jungle. The jungle is not usually savage in Maugham; it is, strangely enough, something pictorially extravagant which surrounds the judicious aesthete. People go to pieces in the Maugham jungle and, living happily as wreckage, disconcert the conventional; they do not, as in Kipling, discover the masonic ritualism of the animals. Of the two writers it is hard to say who is the more romantic, the more masochistic, the more knowing. Kipling's saving quality was his cunning, Maugham's his common sense; both have an embarrassment before emotion, a gnawing sense of immanent evil.

But really Maugham has more in common with Shaw. He has the Shaw trick of turning things upside down, but it is a trick which does not come into its own until Maugham begins to write short stories. The form invites that artifice. You wrote a story about a gentleman and showed he was a cad, you divulged the acidity in what "the world" calls virtue and the humanity in what it calls vice. Good women turn out to be bitches; if you redeem the prostitute it is because you lust after her. (*Rain*). This topsy-turvy became fantasy in Shaw; but Maugham's imagination is defective there. He is unexcitable. Shaw drunk might sing sentimentally *The Harp that Once on Tara's Walls;* Maugham, one feels, would choose the more moderate langours of *The Lily of Laguna*. What begins as an attack on convention in Maugham, and especially on the lady and gentleman convention, spreads and deepens into a general philosophy of life (at first dramatic and finally tolerant and ironical) that everything turns into its opposite. People are destroyed by their virtues as well as by their vices.

Take the new collection of stories, *The Mixture as Before** (said, one hopes mistakenly, to be his last). The theory is illustrated frivolously in the tale of how three fat women living on a starvation diet at Antibes, decide to guzzle once more when a thin woman whom they grow to hate, comes along and crams down as much as she can hold without fear for her figure. The gentleman preoccupation: an actor palms himself off as a sahib and, after he is exposed, behaves with the fantastic gallantry of the sahib magazines; a lie has turned into truth. The moral question: a murderer is supposed to suffer pangs of conscience, but here is a murderer who has no pangs but actually was driven to a wicked crime by his conscience. The aesthetic question, the 'nineties' great preoccupation with the artist as the social antithesis of the gentleman—this is the theme of many Maugham novels and stories, *Theatre*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, etc.—is illustrated by the vulgar horror of a great singer's life contrasted with the sublimity of her art. The problem of happiness: the happiest man in the French convict settlement is one who has just been made executioner; preparing for his first execution, he enjoys the scenery like an honest man properly content with the world, unaware that he is about to be murdered. This story, *An Official Position* and another, *The Facts of Life*, are Maugham at his best. The last is brilliant comedy of extraordinary ingenuity and narrative skill.

Mr. Maugham has often written about the position of the artist but has obviously his period's stress on the pure artist. This may be all right for painters and musicians, but for novelists it is dubious doctrine. Maugham's own common sense has rejected the cultural snobbery of the art hounds and, without discarding a belief in the isolation of writers he has nevertheless had the wisdom to recognise that he is a moralist who works, as moralists must, within their limits. At least, he is drawn now towards the middle-class clubman's common sense; and now towards a monk-like asceticism. He is the unshockable and the detached. Yet there are no detached people. If detachment means attachment to the search for truth, one cannot say Mr. Maugham *is* altogether attached to this search. In two-thirds of *Of Human Bondage* perhaps; but not in the stories. He is attached there to his pattern which is what remains for him of that early addiction to "art for art's sake" which he confessed to and disapproved of in *The Summing Up*. And pattern is the trick. For this reason a brilliant piece of macabre narrative like the executioner's story has the enormous readability, the exact, lucid if slightly perfunctory prose, of the best Maugham manner, and carries one to the most savage height of irony, yet makes no profound impression at all. A moralist, he has displayed not a curious and horrifying fragment of life, but an argument. On the other hand, a purely artificial story like *The Facts of Life*, in which a young man goes to Paris and, heedless of his father's warnings of the awful consequences, gambles, lends money to a stranger and picks up a woman, and comes back having committed all these follies without damage, indeed having made 6,000 francs on the deal, produces a lasting impression on the reader. It has not merely exposed the fatal weakness of the moralist position; it is perfect artificial comedy without pretending to be otherwise.

There is another sense in which the Maugham detachment is skin deep. His scepticism has the virtues of pity, tolerance, humanity, an eye for humbug and a love of the diversity of human nature. But his real attachment is to his class. Where his contemporaries became sociologists and prophets; or, uneasy in their class and unanchored, tossed about like pretty boats in the harbours of their own private sensibilities, Maugham, insisting on a writer's duty, assumed the stability and immortality of the world he lived in. Hence the capacity to see an unruly world at one remove, the dapper and detached figure in the Ritz bar. (He knows, as his last novel, *Christmas Holiday* showed, the bar may get a bomb in it, but it was characteristic that he sought to teach a modern young hero a lesson by the pure Symons-Wilde device of making him spend a *nuit blanche* with a prostitute vicariously expiating sin. Oh 1890!) We feel to-day the need of being more direct, less reflective in narrative because it is impossible to keep the world at one remove from the middle classes any more.

Two novels of Maugham's stand out, one by God and the other by Mammon. *Of Human Bondage* did for its time what is more popular in French literature than in English owing to our fear of priggishness: the honest portrait of a young man. Thackeray had tried it in *Pendennis*—a novel which ought to be re-read. Maugham does not in the least mind admitting the two great English shames: snobbishness and priggishness. Mammon blossomed perfectly in the classic merriment of *Cakes and Ale*. These books, like all of Maugham's—this is due to his devotion to technique—improve on re-reading. He has always kept his head; in *Cakes and Ale* he kept his heart. The sentimentality of the man whose mask of disappointment has become second nature does not show here. Iago has ceased to moralise. He seems to have felt; and yet to have retained his wits.

V. S. PRITCHETT

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DENT

most considerable English novelist of his age, and it may be well here to state why, since his latest novel certainly does not substantiate this claim.

The novel as a self-contained work of art is a feasible proposition, as Flaubert, Turgenev, James, Proust, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf have shown. One may, that is to say, prefer to see the human comedy as Cézanne saw the landscape of Provence. But to do this is to forsake the mainstream of fiction for the backwaters and lagoons where, amid a beauty characteristic of such places, life is still and seen as if in a kind of ideal past. It were foolish to deny the beauty and value of this kind of art, which has essentially a lasting quality lacking in whatever braves the attrition of currents and rapids. But the fact remains that the traffic of life centres in the mainstream and it is here that we shall find the basic qualities of the novelist's art most generously displayed: the creation of interesting and "real" characters, the ability to get inside the minds of people whose lives and interests are foreign to the novelist's own; to make them speak in character; the invention of plausible detail; the mysterious narrative power that has so little to do with "form"; the sense of poetry—epic in event, lyrical in gesture, dramatic in dialogue and the concatenation of significant, because unusual, things; above all, vitality. If you are a mainstream novelist, in possession of these faculties, it does not greatly matter that your style should be undistinguished, your system of values coarse, your philosophy absurd and your aesthetic sensibility not of the keenest. Balzac was in all these respects a clodhopper when put beside Flaubert, yet there is surely no doubt which was the greater novelist. Again, *The Eternal Husband* is a great work of art in a sense in which *David Copperfield* is not; yet Dickens has a scope and an appeal to which Dostoevsky cannot pretend—even where, as in *The Demons*, he seems to dig deeper into the human soul than any other novelist before him. But in the mainstream it is breadth and pace that matter, not depth, for it is the surface that has to do the carrying.

Mr. Hutchinson is, with Jules Romains, the only novelist now writing who seems to me to possess the scope, the vigour, the breadth and the extravagant ability of the great nineteenth-century figures. Though far from being an intellectual clodhopper, there is nothing in the least exquisite, or even fastidious, about him: his style is unpretentious and rather clumsy, his aesthetic sense very rudimentary, his philosophy undistinguished by subtlety. But these disadvantages are enormously outweighed, in his four best novels, by the extraordinary richness of his equipment. Possessed of a grand, poetic vision of life, a first-class intuitive knowledge of people and an excellent ear for the sounds they make when they open their mouths, Mr. Hutchinson has shown himself competent to fill a canvas of any size with any kind of promising subject, no matter what the difficulties of detail. Where most of us niggle timidly round the home counties, terrified to venture abroad lest a wrong detail betray our ignorance and bring us into ridicule, Mr. Hutchinson is ready to "go anywhere, do anything," secure in the knowledge of his own imaginative power, of his endless inventive ability. Those who read the description of the war-stricken German town, in *The Unforgotten Prisoner*; of the journey into the increasing cold, in *One Light Burning* (in some ways his best book); of the old French soldier and his Russian mother measuring the battlefield, of the escape under the mask of goat's dung, in *Shining Scabbard*; of the beginning of the revolution in Moscow, in *Testament*: will surely feel themselves to have been in the grip of a great novelist, to have been caught up and held in the multitudinous imagination of a writer who can afford to be prodigal of his resources.

Those who agree with me about Mr. Hutchinson will not mind an occasional disappointment: writers who have plenty to say must be allowed a few lapses; *The Fire and the Wood* is one of them. This painful novel retells the story of *Testament*, transferring the scene from Bolshevik Russia to Nazi Germany. Instead of Count Anton Scheffler, the unjustly persecuted is in this case the young Jewish doctor, Josef Zeppichmann; instead of the officer's invalid wife, we are asked to accept a consumptive skivvy who keeps a diary full of pathetic dreams. All the horrible and squalid paraphernalia of Nazi rule are there—the rubber truncheons, the underground silence of extreme torture, the thick-ear brutality of the S.A. All this is very brilliantly done; the scenes of medical life at the beginning are perhaps even better, though they are too minute and the novel takes far too long to get under way. Eventually the persecuted pair escape to England and we are left in doubt as to whether one, or both, or neither of them dies of the disease which is in some sort the chief figure in the book. The characters are true and well drawn, the trial of Zeppichmann—though not nearly as brilliantly poignant as the trial in *Testament*—has the same effect of tragic farce. And the first scene in the book, which describes the moving of a heavy wardrobe by a number of incompetent people in a lodging-house, is very funny indeed. But one has a feeling that the author has written this book in a hurry. There are false notes ("Here, use Neuling's glass, he's not more consumptive than you are"—would anyone speak like that?) and though the action is never woolly but always intensely *seen*, some passages are over-orchestrated through what appears to be lack of care. There is a plethora of "authentic" detail that ends by wearying the attention. Haste is apt to produce an emphasis that defeats its own end. The same criticism applies, and more disastrously, to the central intrigue. To remake the theme of *La Vie de Bohême* to-day is a most hazardous proceeding. Perhaps only a truly naïve writer could achieve the pathos of simple love and its unhampered strength; even *A Farewell to Arms* sailed too near the wind for unqualified success. In Mr. Hutchinson's case the result is, I am afraid, sentimentality. Moreover it is unfortunate in the extreme that he should have chosen that particular milieu at this particular moment; there is a time for everything, and we cannot just now be expected to give the attention of our leisure hours to a 400-page description of the swarm of mechanical insects which are doing their best to kill us, ruin our country and our civilisation.

Escapism in literature has become, not only no longer a reproach, but a positive desideratum. I can imagine a pretty large public for *The Adventurer*, not because Miss Meredith herself necessarily wants to escape (her novel is strictly extrovert), but because she knows her readers do. Hence a long, deep plunge into the late Victorian era, all the trappings of which are lovingly and painstakingly enumerated. This story, of a clever girl who answers an advertisement in a matrimonial paper and marries an adventurer who commits murder and leaves her to make her way to fame and fortune as a dressmaker, is not a work of art, because the author, instead of trying to see her people for herself, has been content to make a book out of bits and pieces of nineteenth-century fiction, and has written it in a style resembling an untidy old work-basket bursting with cast-off tassels and buttons and tangles of silk. Miss Meredith, however, writes *con amore*, which helps a lot, though she does not always stop to consider whether her dialogue is appropriate; some of it is hopelessly anachronistic ("I shouldn't know," in answer to a question, is pure 1938). But buried among the trinkets lies a relationship which, though lightly sketched in, rings truer than Mr. Hutchinson's consumptive duo: the marriage of convenience, this side of love but on the further side of friendship, between Flora Vane and her rough diamond. This is truly observed, moving, and, within limits, memorable.

Town and Haven is what has come to be known as a "regional" novel. There is room for this kind of thing, for the simple reason that all countries are full of people who like reading about their own particular corners; local patriotism is at once real, naïve, and a source of vitality. Of Mr. Harland's Yorkshire I am not competent to speak, but it certainly carries conviction, and his handling of the theme—the rise of a seaside resort and the struggle for ascendancy between town and harbour—is skilful, in a rather conventional way. He writes more carefully than Miss Meredith, but without real distinction, and the images are not strikingly new. However, he knows how to tell his story without wasting time over insignificant detail; and that is a great thing.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

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A Federated Europe. By LORD DAVIES. *Gollancz.* 3s. 6d.

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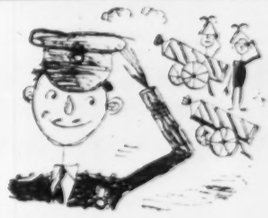

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fighting for?" become superfluous. On the other hand, if we survive this summer, the creation of a Fifth Column in the Reich should be our main winter occupation, and Germans will not risk their lives against the Gestapo unless they see a preferable alternative to it.

The three books on my list are all concerned with this alternative to Hitlerism. None of them dares to suggest that our job is to stop Hitler shaping Europe, and then leave it as it is. There is a tacit agreement that the world beloved by Messrs. Baldwin, Bonnet and Brüning cannot be restored. If we stop Hitler knocking Europe into shape we must do the job ourselves. Lord Davies finds the solution in a grandiose political machine, a super-state, based on a European two-chamber system of representation, with a President, Federal Council, and Supreme Court, and Ministers of External Relationships, Justice, Defence and Finance. "A ministry of economics or reconstruction has also been suggested," he adds; and discloses in this passing comment a die-hard Liberalism. The financial and industrial chaos is to be left unblemished by sanity or public control. Lord Davies gives us the shadow of unity: its substance is left to the providential workings of *laissez-faire*.

> We must practise toleration towards all forms of internal government, so long as nations refrain from acts of aggression and tyranny. This is the principle which we proclaimed in the Spanish Civil war.

If Lord Davies thinks that the British and French peoples are going to die for the principle of non-intervention, he is sadly mistaken.

It is persons like Lord Davies who delight the soul of Mr. D. N. Pritt, whose *Federal Illusion* pretends to prove that all plans for world or European federation are merely the smoke-screens of capitalist reaction. Mr. Curry's Penguin *The Case for Federal Union* comes in for the first attack, and Mr. Pritt correctly demonstrates the futility of all world-federation plans and observes that Mr. Curry might well have studied the Russian experiment in federative organisation. He then turns to less ambitious schemes, based on Anglo-French co-operation, and argues that they are particularly noxious smoke-screens and anyway impracticable. Nothing is any use but a Socialist revolution, and once Socialism is achieved the problems to be solved by Federalism will automatically disappear.

Apart from his usual high-handed treatment of historical facts Mr. Pritt's criticisms are often pertinent. But his own positive proposals are as void as his opponents'.

> With the same inevitability that capitalism involves war, Socialism involves peace, that is to say, war is impossible between Socialist States. For them the causes of war are *automatically* eliminated. . . . There is no need to fight for markets when you are your own market and you are producing all you can consume and consuming all you can produce.

These propositions are true on one of two conditions. Either, by an apocalyptic transformation, the world becomes a single centrally organised socialist state, or each Socialist state is a completely self-sufficient unit. As neither of these is probable, the problem of the relation between states, even where socialised, is a real one; and it is mere wish-fulfilment to avoid it by reiterating "Permanent peace can be won by Socialism and by Socialism alone." If Britain and France achieved Socialism, their governments would still be faced with profound conflicts of interest in relation to each other, to Germany, Russia and the U.S.A. Mr. Pritt's Marxist Illusion is as dangerous as the *Federal Illusion* he so ably exposes. Fortunately it is not shared by all Socialists.

Common both to Lord Davies and to Mr. Pritt is the belief that there is some short cut to permanent peace, that plans to eliminate war for ever are preferable to those which seek merely to prevent it for a generation. This illusion is the disease both of Liberal and of Marxist ideologues. Reaching for the unattainable, they spurn the precautions which lie to hand: preaching each his own nostrum, they discredit the more modest practitioners who lay no claim to the possession of a final cure, but at least know the condition of the patient. To this latter class belongs M. Saurat. Readers should not be misled by his urbane style and clarity of expression into thinking that here is merely a superficial essay: *French War Aims* is a brilliant and profound exposition of the French case, and contains more revolutionary matter than Mr. Pritt's or Lord Davies's books.

Rightly dismissing all schemes which rest merely on Anglo-French co-operation, M. Saurat centres attention on Germany, and boldly asserts that, if we really desire to liberate the German people, we cannot practise non-intervention. If Hitlerism is not to shape Europe, we must shape the future of Germany, even if this means five years of occupation. How else, he asks, can we either feed or disarm her? How else assist those democratic forces which have been systematically undermined by Hitlerism? How else prevent the atrocities which Poles and Czechs—yes and Germans—will demand as vengeance?

But, argues M. Saurat, Germany is the central problem in another sense. Her people have intuitively felt the need for a united Europe and Hitler has attempted to achieve it by conquest. If we win we must satisfy that German feeling for unity; and this will involve drastic reconstruction in France and Britain. Finance, the metal industries and education must be placed under international public control; exports and imports must be planned in common during peace as well as in war. The sacrifices we impose on German nationalism must be accepted voluntarily by the victors, too. Otherwise we shall not be able to face the social problem. For

> Social reform cannot be carried out efficiently in the present divided state of the nations of the West. Social reform will only be carried out effectively when a super-national unit has been constituted and is in a position not to have to consider too closely the behaviour of its neighbours.

The difference between M. Saurat and the ideologues is one of method. He considers first the work which must be done and then designs the machinery to suit the work. Federal Union is mere machinery greased with good intentions, Mr. Pritt's "Socialism" an abstract Utopian antithesis to our present social order. M. Saurat's war-aims are a series of practical jobs to be done. Englishmen who think themselves progressive and the French "reactionary" might well consider whether there is not a more positive will to freedom in his book than in most of our progressive or revolutionary ideas. Consider, for instance, his demand for a uniform system of education in Britain, France and Germany, inspected by perhaps Swiss or Americans. As he drily remarks:

> Education of old was directed to building up a ruling caste of which all the children had to be taught the same things, namely the secrets of the ruling caste: this, in England, was called character-building.

There are too many Englishmen whose unreflective desire to be generous to "Germany" is matched by a more conscious desire to leave our own social anomalies generously alone. To this spirit of lazy non-intervention M. Saurat offers a digestible antidote. I recommend it whole-heartedly.

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KEGAN PAUL

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

The Life of the White Devil. By CLIFFORD BAX. *Cassell.* 8s. 6d.

Those Borgias. By GEORGE BORODIN. *Faber.* 8s. 6d.

> Your beauty! O ten thousand curses on't!
> How long have I beheld the devil in crystal?
> Thou hast led me like a heathen sacrifice
> With music and with fatal yokes of flowers
> To my eternal ruin. Woman to man
> Is either a god or a wolf.

So says Webster: but not Mr. Bax. He has presented us with the latest metamorphosis in literature. When we turn the pages to find the White Devil we are comforted to find, *mutatis mutandis*, that she was merely an unlucky debutante. The story is set out quite correctly. Flamineo is reduced to the status of an inoffensive lutanist, Marcello is promoted to prime villain who prostitutes his sister for his own ends, while Victoria is a high-spirited beauty who made a bad match and connived at the assassination of her husband, but redeemed herself by a noble death. Has this new biography added anything to Mr. F. L. Lucas's account in his monumental edition of Webster? Has it contributed to scholarship? Not a great deal: some passages are perhaps amplified. Then has it illuminated the noumena of the period or the souls of the characters? This we must now examine.

Two chapters are devoted to informing us that Renaissance Italy differed from our age. Yet somehow at the end of the book we don't believe it. It is not enough to state differences: we must *feel* them. What are style, texture, the balance of chapters, the changes in pace but the means to fire a story which would otherwise be unintelligible to us? A biography is nothing without imagination; and imagination has two functions. First the imagination to see the facts in proportion to the ideas and manners of the time: then—and it is the most difficult of all arts—to translate this into words which

will make us feel it to be true. A mule from the Duke of Urbino trots into Rome slung with the heads of thirty brigands; a father puts back the clocks of Rome to save his son from execution; arquebuses fire at dead of night; the Pope erects rows of obelisks and smells out sexual crimes; corpses in the Tiber, blood on the stairs, the palace afire—Pride, Lust, Murder, Wrath, Ambition, these are the violent emotions which stalk through the age, vulgar in their crudity, splendid in their intensity, and magnificent in their horror. Contrary to a popular belief, facts rarely, if ever, speak for themselves. It is not enough to remind the reader that these men flaunted jewel-embossed codpieces and strangled their unchaste wives after a night of embraces. Mr. Bax has fashioned his figures accurately enough, but they live in this world not in theirs.

Perhaps his last chapter may explain why his account is so unvarnished. He is in a pet that Webster should have mangled history and written such a slipshod and unbalanced play. Webster, so runs the argument, was a great tragic poet but a very bad dramatist. If one sets down scene by scene the story of any Jacobean play, e.g., *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the confusion of plot is so fantastic that it rapidly becomes a farce. If one has Shakespeare's greatest tragedies in mind, then no doubt Webster is a hopeless bungler. But is *The White Devil* less dramatic than *Cymbeline?* There is only space here to be dogmatic. Despite the unsustained verse, the occasional bathos, the play does act magnificently, much better than one would expect from reading it and far better than the *Duchess of Malfi*. Nor is this invalidated because the necessary attributes—voice, speed, acting and imaginative producing—are rarely found together on any London stage.

And yet after all it may be dangerous to call for imaginative writing. Mr. Borodin dedicates his book to Klabund, who first revealed to him the dark soul of the Borgias: we know what to expect. The scene is laid in Heaven, where St. Michael calls the Borgias to take the stand and wisecracks echo in the celestial courts, as they recount their sinful lives. It is difficult to review a book when one is convinced that it breaks most of the canons of good taste and when the reviewer believes that the tone and humour are such as would impress the dimmer members of a go-ahead Sixth Form. The Borgias are supposed to represent the epitome of Evil, so superbly arrogant that Hell itself raises a hoarse half-human cheer. The pages reveal no such spirit; instead we are asked to equate Evil with meanness, a few murders and some smutty sniggering. There is no harm in writing a fantasy on historical characters. There is much to be praised in trying to create an atmosphere of powerful and fearful emotions. Only first make a distinction between pride and swanking, cruelty and coxcombry, passion and fiddling.

NOEL ANNAN

SUPERSTITION AT HOME

English Folklore. By CHRISTINA HOLE. *Batsford.* 10s. 6d.

English Folklore is a dipper's book. Open it at almost any page and you will be delighted by sentences like these:

> At Crondall, in Hampshire, a ghostly flock of sheep is sometimes heard passing by, while at Calcutt little pigs run across the road on Christmas Eve. . . .
>
> Fried mice were a cure for many troubles, particularly weakness in children. One cure for whooping-cough was to take the child to a sheepfold and let a sheep breathe on him, afterwards laying him down where a sheep had been lying. . . .
>
> Some of the fear and reverence due to the boar has descended to the common pig. In the Highlands there was formerly a strong prejudice against eating pork which probably sprang from memories of the pig's sacred character. Sailors and fishermen rarely mention the animal by its proper name, but refer to "the thing," or by some term of their own. In some North Country villages this taboo extends also to the seamen's relatives so that the word "pig" is never heard in the district. . . .

You would have to be very unsusceptible to the charm of old superstitions and local oddities, and incurious about their origins, not to find interest here. Miss Hole has collected many such pieces of knowledge and grouped them in chapters under the headings "Courtship and Marriage," "Sun, Moon and Stars," "Birds and Beasts," and so on. A few of these chapters I read straight through, but after a while the lack of argument, the piling-up of instances brought my eye to a standstill. Walking round a gallery one doesn't pay attention to all of the pictures; the rest of *English Folklore* I enjoyed—and enjoyed far more—by assiduously dipping. Rowlandson's cartoon of a ducking party, which serves as frontispiece, made me turn to the illustrations of ducking stools and thence to Miss Hole's account of the custom of flinging suspected witches, with their fingers tied to their toes, into ponds to see if they would float: those that did not were released (if alive). An Act passed in 1736 made these barbarous practices illegal, but so strong was the belief in witchcraft, that the "water test" was still being employed as late as 1825, when a Suffolk man voluntarily submitted to it rather than endure the suspicions of his neighbours. Cases of witchcraft find their way into court even to-day. Miss Hole mentions several.

Or bees. The word caught my eye in the index, and remembering vaguely stories I had heard as a child, I followed up the references.

TURKS AT THE OFFICE

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Among moralists and hymn-writers the bee has long enjoyed a reputation for industry—

> God's little epigrams, the bees,
> So pointed and impartial—

but its place in popular belief has been different and less easy to define. The hive, I recalled, had to be told of a death in the house, and at one time was put in mourning like the rest of the family. Miss Hole mentions this, together with a number of other strange beliefs. Bees were sensitive not only to death, but to bad temper, swearing and immorality; it was felt that they should not be bought with money, but if that was unavoidable, then only gold must be used; and in the North of England "they were thought to worship on Christmas Eve by humming the Hundredth Psalm in their hives at the same hour as the cattle fell on their knees in the byre to adore Jesus." They provided, too, a test for virginity: the bride who could walk through a swarm unstung was above suspicion. It is not very difficult, even if we haven't read Maeterlinck, to understand how these mysterious creatures attracted something like worship.

Superstition, one gathers from books such as Miss Hole's, flourishes most among those whose lives are most subject to chance. Not only the countryman and the sailor, in contact with the elements, but the actor at the mercy of public opinion, fence themselves round with innumerable omens, taboos, propitiations. I did not know until reading page 42 of *English Folklore* that *Macbeth* is an unlucky play and that the Witch's Song has the power of raising evil; that whistling in a theatre or the colour yellow is regarded with horror; that one actor will not look over another's shoulder in a mirror; that if an actor's shoes squeak as he makes his first entrance he will be successful; that a cat is lucky unless it crosses the stage, etc., etc. Miss Hole uses the present tense in writing about actors, so presumably these superstitions, unlike most of the others catalogued in her book, are still believed in. I can think of only one type of man likely to be more superstitious than the actor, and that is the gambler. So far as I can discover he does not appear in *English Folklore*.

I will end this haphazard but not ungrateful notice with one more quotation:

> According to the *Times* of Feb. 16th, 1855, a heavy fall of snow in South Devon on February 8th showed the marks of some peculiar and unknown animal appearing in all sorts of inaccessible places. . . . The *Illustrated London News* for February 24th published an eye-witness's account which noted the most singular part of the whole affair, namely that the marks followed each other in a single line over a distance of about one hundred miles. The prints resembled a donkey's hoof, and passed over roofs, hayricks, and high walls without disturbing the snow on either side. The distance between the marks was about 8 inches, and in every parish the steps were of the same length and the marks the same size. Whatever made the prints seems to have approached the doors of several houses and then to have retreated from them, to have crossed an estuary two miles wide, to have covered one hundred miles in a single night, and to have been something with which the local people were entirely unfamiliar. . . . What happened to it subsequently is unknown; no further trace was ever seen. It is not very surprising that the local people thought it was the Devil.

G. W. STONIER

A FRIENDLY ACT

Les Grands Lyriques Anglais. Traduction de FÉLIX ROSE. *Didier.* 7s. 6d.

This anthology, the first of its sort, contains over four hundred pages—on the left English poems, opposite on the right, translations of these into French verse. Almost three-quarters of the book is devoted to the Nineteenth Century. Dryden is omitted, and Pope is not represented by his happiest passages. M. Félix Rose seems usually more concerned to show the likeness of our Romantics to their French contemporaries than to bring out the qualities particular to the English. Thus the extreme precision of adjective and verb upon which the beauty of Keats so largely depends, is here sacrificed. To take an instance from Rossetti, a poet for whom the translator has a particular affection, here are a couple of lines from the sonnet *Silent Noon:*

> . . . Golden king-cup fields with silver edge
> Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge

and here is the equivalent offered to us:

> Des champs de bouton d'or aux lueurs argentées
> Sont bordés de narcisse empiétant sur les haies.

A more faithful rendering may well be unacceptable in French, but this version does seem to muff the landscape in the original. Often, too, M. Rose seems to alter the sense quite gratuitously, as in the final stanza of Arnold's *The Last Word*. He has had the courage to translate into French such aggressively local products as *Little Brown Jug* and *Widdicombe Fair*. His virtuosity is most apparent in Shelley's *The Cloud:*

> Je suis le damoiseau de la terre et de l'eau,
> Et le nourrisson du ciel.
> Je traverse, volage, l'océan et les plages.
> Je change, mais suis immortel!

M. Rose deserves our gratitude for his courageous attempt to introduce our poetry to his compatriots. Moreover, the interest of the anthology to the English reader is considerable, because a comparison of the English and French helps one to understand better the particularities of our own language.

SELF-PORTRAITS

East End My Cradle. By WILLY GOLDMAN. *Faber.* 8s. 6d.

Brother to the Ox. By FRED KITCHEN. *Dent.* 10s. 6d.

These two books describe lives which must be almost as unusual among readers as they are among writers. Both Mr. Willy Goldman who was an apprentice in a sweat-shop, and Mr. Fred Kitchen who has been a farm-labourer all his life, belong to the objective school of writers. They assume, quite justifiably, the interest of their subject matter. Autobiography is inspiring, both write extremely well.

Mr. Willy Goldman was born between Wapping and Whitechapel. Here, behind the elegant façade of the Whitechapel Road, there stretch for miles slums whose monotony is a refinement of wretchedness. From "Welk Street" to the nearest open space is 2¼ miles. In such places it is hard to say which season is the most intolerable. According to Mr. Goldman, even winter with its cold and its damp and the unwelcome emphasis they give to overcrowding, is preferable to summer when the houses become stinking and verminous ovens and the inhabitants mill with the refuse in the street. The people in "Welk Street" worked in sweat shops or were street traders, the bottom levels of a competitive business world, each set unjustifiably envying the others their miserable lot. Half were Christians, the rest Jews. Of the latter the older people were refugees, still speaking with Polish or Russian accents, who kept, in their fear of authority and their avoidance of the Christians when they were drunk, a memory of pogroms. Mr. Goldman's picture of this hidden and inarticulate hell is vivid and intimate. He has called up with uncommon intensity a series of impressions and imitations. Childhood in the streets, adolescence flirting in Whitechapel Road, young manhood with love and friendship and both of them on the dole. He can be as sad as lovers on tenement stairs and as gay as a bus or a barrowload of oranges. Mr. Goldman rattles along at a crowded metropolitan pace. There is enough experience and feeling here for many books; only the later ones will have to go slower and deeper; Mr. Goldman has skimmed the cream for this one.

Where Mr. Goldman protests against the society that makes Welk Streets necessary, Mr. Kitchen is resigned. Though he was a talented boy at school, he became a farm labourer at the age of 14 and has worked with his hands ever since. He grew up on a nobleman's estate in the West Riding, where a hint of feudalism lingered on. He has lived to see the decay of estates, to see the countryside swallowed up in coal mines and the decline of ploughing as an art, but he can still remember the morning mist on the home farm and spring in the orchards. You may say that these are poor consolations for a life of near poverty and no prospects, but Mr. Kitchen has the advantage of being enough of a poet to feel their significance and so little ambitious as to be fairly contented. And it is not that he is deluded, for he has the countryman's wily cynicism as armour against hypocrisy in others as well as in himself, and can laugh as well as anyone at the church-going grocer who weighed his thumb with the sugar.

Mr. Kitchen writes with skilful simplicity. Perhaps this wistful, faintly disillusioned, milkman philosopher sometimes wishes he had found the W.E.A. earlier in life. But though he is, as the blurb puts it, "a natural writer," the life he has followed has probably been much happier than that which he might have had. And his talent has found a belated crystallization now. *Brother to the Ox* is well named, for it is gentle, slow and backward-gazing. GRAHAM BELL

Joseph Stalin. A Short Biography prepared by the MARX-ENGELS-LENIN INSTITUTE. *Lawrence and Wishart.* 1s. 6d.

Stalin. By EUGENE LYONS. *Harrap.* 9s.

The Red Army. By ERICH WOLLENBERG. *Secker and Warburg.* 10s. 6d.

The two new lives of Stalin are of mild interest. *Joseph Stalin*, which has been prepared by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, was presumably issued for internal consumption in Russia. Reading it you would gain the impression that Russian Communism and its leader Joseph Stalin are purely Russian affairs. Hardly any reference is made to foreign policy, and when we come to the events of August and September, 1939, we find the following significant passage: "By signing mutual assistance pacts with the Baltic States, the Soviet Union has immeasurably strengthened the defences of the land of Socialism and its international position. Under the leadership of Stalin, the Soviet Union delivered from the yoke of Polish landlords and capitalists our kindred peoples in Western Ukraine and Western Byelo-Russia, enabling them to join the single family of the free and happy peoples of the U.S.S.R." There is no reference to the German-Soviet Pact!

Eugene Lyons' *Stalin* may be useful to those who have not the time or the patience to read Souvarine's masterly biography, which it follows closely in describing Stalin's life up till the death of Lenin. The latter half of the book is more interesting, as it contains an account of Mr. Lyons' own interview with Stalin and his personal experiences in Moscow. But here again he adds little to the information he gave in his *Assignment in Utopia*. He rightly contrasts Stalin, the Party Boss, with Hitler and Mussolini, the popular leaders, and leaves unsolved the problem of how this man, who in private life gives the impression of a kindly bear, has been capable either of his crimes or of his achievements.

The new edition of *The Red Army* brings Mr. Wollenberg's history of Soviet imperialism up to the Finnish War and makes the title even less appropriate. This is now only indirectly a study of the Red Army, and its author's patent partisanship makes it difficult to assess its historical value. It is interesting to note Mr. Wollenberg's statement that Tuchachevsky, liquidated in 1938, was the inventor of parachute tactics. "The idea of dropping such detachments in the enemy's rear presupposes that the area is peopled by inhabitants in sympathy with the aerial invaders. . . . The conception is therefore closely connected with an international Socialist

revolution." Once again Hitlerism has borrowed a Communist technique and developed it far more thoroughly than any Communist could have done. Whereas the parachutists were complete failures in Finland, they succeeded in Flanders.

What of the Night? By "WATCHMAN." *Hamish Hamilton.* 10s. 6d.

Some months ago "Watchman" wrote a lively and very well informed sketch of leading parliamentary personalities, published under the title *Right Honourable Gentlemen.* In this book he showed himself a Churchillian critic of Chamberlainism with the usual inclination to underrate both the personalities and the strength of the Labour movement. He did not leave much room for a sequel and *What of the Night?* is a rather fragmentary affair although it includes some first-rate descriptions of the atmosphere both of the Commons and of the Lords, and a deadly description of Capt. Margesson. It is well worth reading to-day to remind us of the state of mind of an intelligent parliamentary observer in the months immediately preceding the formation of the new Government. "To listen to Halifax is to endure the instruction of a kindly pedagogue. Merely to read Churchill is to be thrilled, convulsed and brought to the edge of tears. Between these two I feel almost certain that the succession rests, and I think that Halifax is the more likely. He has offended nobody. . . . He will live learning and die loving." Though "Watchman" was able to predict that most of the Tory rebels were likely candidates for places in a new Government, he must be astonished by the success of men like Attlee, Greenwood, Dalton and Morrison. To the last-named he makes one reference only: "For some reason Herbert Morrison's stock is high," while he describes Mr. Attlee as "a frail personality." It is also interesting to note his high opinion of Sir John Reith. The second half of the book is padded out with a series of disconnected chapters on War Aims, War Finance, Propaganda, etc. The value of the book lies in its understanding of the Tory mind and its special appreciation of Capt. Margesson's role in the most disastrous period of our history.

Week-end Competitions

No. 540

Set by Thomas Smallbones.

On the evening of June 10th, 1940, in the Elysian Fields, Shelley, Byron, Swinburne and Browning each presented Garibaldi with a poem. The usual prizes are offered for any one of these poems. None of the poets, not even Swinburne, had time to write more than twenty lines.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Friday, June 21st.

2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.

3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 538

Set by T. C. Worsley

Queen Victoria's first recorded words are said to have been "I will be good." Competitors are invited to invent the first recorded words of: Tennyson, Lytton Strachey, Caligula, Wagner, Horace Walpole, Socrates, Henry James, Mae West, Spooner, Samuel Butler, Voltaire, Oscar Wilde, Sir Galahad, Frederick the Great, Marie Corelli, William Blake, G. K. Chesterton, Colonel Blimp, Cassandra, Mrs. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, The Marquis de Sade, Major Quisling, Jowett.

The usual prizes are offered for the best set of four.

Report by T. C. Worsley

This competition was not as easy as it looked. Victoria's utterance was memorable because it was both credible for the child and in the character (or the popular version of the character) of the adult-to-be. *Mots* as such were not really admissible, although there was a selection of quite funny ones, such as Geo. Lewis on Mae West: "A girl must be well up in grammar, especially the genders, *he*, *she*, and *it*." Most of the names on the card never started at all; many, like Wagner and Socrates, fell at the first fence. Spooner and Mae West found the most popular backing; and it was the former who supplied the dirtier cracks. Cassandra, my own fancy, was never very prominent. Sir Robert Witt and R. S. Jaffray were runners-up. No one succeeded, I think, in getting a place with all four choices and I recommend that the prizes be pooled and divided between these three best, R. C. O., Muriel Sly, and Towanbucket:

Lytton Strachey: A good man, yes, but in the very worst sense.
Mae West: Refinement my buttocks.
Wilde (at his first party): A trifle! Oh, boy!!
Cassandra: Sez you? R. C. O.

William Blake: I've been sitting in the lavatory for half an hour talking with the angels.
Benjamin Jowett: I am Jowett.
Marquis de Sade: Bring me some little girls to play with.
Mae West: Say, Doc, you sure pulled me out of a tight spot just now. MURIEL SLY

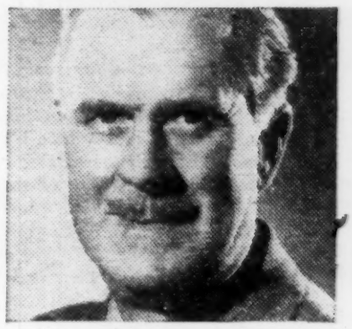
Mae West: A girl with my figure can't be expected to go straight.
Canon Spooner: I hope to live up to the speed of the Crooners.
Oscar Wilde: Nurse: Has it ever occurred to you that this milk-bottle and these napkins constitute a vicious circle?
Sir Galahad: A gentleman's a gentleman for a' that. TOWANBUCKET

Here are a selection of the others:—

Voltaire: I don't want to go to church (J. C. B. Date)
Samuel Butler: Lord, how I hate Papa. (Gordon Simpson)
Marquis de Sade: How I loathe the little girl next door. (S. J. Sharpless)
Il faut souffrir pour être belle (M. Manby)
Oscar Wilde: I seem to have "arrived"—already. (Sir Robert Witt)
I will if I want to. (D. M. Mitchell)
Colonel Blimp: Where are the boys of the old brigade? (Q. R.)
Spooner: My great mission will be to seek winners. (R. S. Jaffray)
Ma, tummy. (C. F. Rathbone)
Pant the wot. (Antony Crowe)
The bleeding folks always want me to be mucking up silk, when I just want to cry quietly in my ladle. (Little Billee)
Oh, tummy, my mummie hurts. (E. W. Fordham)
Lytton Strachey: I will never worship blindly. (J. H. G. Gibbs)
Father isn't a *very* sensible man, is he Mother? (K. M. Hamilton)
Mae West: Baby wants to be picked up. (Anthony Crowe)
Say, kids, let's go bust. (B. M. Grant)
I've got it. (M. Manby)
Come up an' see me in my barf. (D. M. Mitchell)
G. K. Chesterton: To say the Head is a just beast is not denying that he is just a beast. (E. Aitken)
I like this funny world. (E. W. J. Fordham)
William Blake: It's a dangerous world I've jumped into. (Little Billee)
Where's my sword? (R. C. O.)
Wagner: Fetch me a noisier rattle. (F. Collingwood)
Major Quisling: I spy. (S. J. Sharpless)
I'll tell teacher. (D. D. R.)
Well, what would you give me? (N. Bodington)
Sir Galahad: I'm going to have a very dull time. (R. S. Jaffray)

In times like these

old friends are best



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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By CYNICUS

WAR MARKETS—EXCHANGE CONTROL AND THE RISE IN "FREE" STERLING—INSURANCE SHARES

THE entry of the Italian jackal into the war did not disturb the Stock Exchange. Indeed, it seemed to be a "bull" point, for prices went higher in the home railway and industrial share markets. Brokers argued that it brought nearer the day when America would come to the active help of her brother democracies and when rumour came of the change in American neutrality legislation, lively shares like International Nickel were marked up sharply. But looking round the Stock Exchange as a whole I must confess that marketability, outside British Government stocks, has virtually ceased to exist. Dealings are on the basis of "negotiation," which means that brokers cannot execute orders which the jobbers cannot match. Although the gilt-edged market remains firm and unruffled, the Treasury must appreciate that the time has gone for the issue of market loans on the vast scale. Institutional and private investors, who usually make the market, could not absorb another £500 millions or so. For further borrowings the Treasury must look to the new savings of wage-earners (another 3 per cent. Defence Bond issue should be left on tap) or to the cash of the now controlled joint stock banks.

* * *

A City friend assured me that America was coming into the war because the "free" sterling rate had risen sharply in two days from 3.20 to 3.83. Actually this recovery followed upon the new Treasury regulations for exchange control. Exports to the U.S.A. and Switzerland—the only remaining gold currencies—must in future be paid for either in those currencies or in sterling acquired through the official market at 4.03 to the £. With all other countries with whom we are trading clearing agreements are being made on a sterling basis at the official rates. As these measures involve a reduction in the demand for free sterling, the Treasury is taking steps to reduce the supply and for the time being no licences will be given for the sale in this country of securities owned by persons resident outside the sterling and franc areas. So at last we have a real exchange control. It is not yet complete because foreigners who hold fixed assets in this country (that is, land and property other than securities) can sell them and transfer their sterling balances abroad. The Treasury has not yet prohibited the transfer of foreign balances on the grounds that they may be wanted for meeting the current needs of foreign banking institutions. But I hope in a short time it will do so and make our exchange control absolute. As it stands we should now reap the maximum exchange benefit from our export trade (invoices being made at the official rates). And throughout the British French, Belgian and Dutch Empires sterling and the currencies linked with sterling will now circulate interchangeably with the utmost freedom. The "free" or "black" market in sterling should now dry up or lapse into such narrowness as to be insignificant.

* * *

What are the war-time prospects of insurance companies? Their shares have suffered a heavy fall in the past twelve months and some investors are enquiring whether they are worth buying at present market prices. I would not touch the life company shares. Normally there is a secular upward trend in life assurance and profits depend more on the enlargement of the volume of business than on the rate of profit. In war-time, however, the volume of business dries up and life companies have to make drafts on their profits to meet possibly heavy depreciation on their investments. The composite insurance companies, which do not depend much on the relatively small profits transferred annually from their life departments, are in a different position. Profits from their fire, accident and general departments represent that portion of their premium income remaining after providing for claims, expenses and unexpired risks against which they maintain reserves at 100 per cent. or more of premium income. As inflation of prices and property values brings an immediate increase in their premium income (composite insurance shares are thus some hedge against inflation) and as war risks are excepted from their policies these companies should do well out of the war. The longer it lasts and the more inflation, the better for their premium income. Their dividends are, of course, usually limited to the amount of interest earnings on their reserves, but reserves are correlated to the size of the premium income. Here are some good composite shares :—

	% of Div. covered by Interest	1939 Dividend	Present Price	High 1939	Gross Yield % £
Alliance £1 ...	84	90%	18½	27½	4 17 3
Eagle Star 10/-...	108	30%	54/-	77/6	5 11 0
Phoenix £1 ...	88	60%	11½	15¾	5 4 3

I would not call Alliance shares particularly cheap, but this company is the strongest in the list and maintains its reserves at 206 per cent. of premium income.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Company Meeting

BOOTS PURE DRUG COMPANY, LIMITED

THE RT. HON. LORD TRENT'S ADDRESS

THE Fifty-second Annual Ordinary General Meeting of Boots Pure Drug Co., Ltd. was held on 6th June, 1940. The Rt. Hon. Lord Trent, Chairman of Directors, said :—

My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As usual, I assume we may take the accounts as read.

Turning to the Balance Sheet you will see that Freehold properties are up £120,668, Plant and fittings £86,220, Stock-in-Trade shows the substantial increase of £743,423, and I will refer to this again in a moment.

Sundry Debtors are up £188,531, whilst amounts owing by Subsidiary Companies show a reduction of £93,698.

On the other side of the Balance Sheet, sundry creditors and provision for contingencies show an increase of £762,634. Up to date we have spent more than £150,000 on A.R.P. and as far as we can see there is unlikely to be any further large sum required under this heading, but as it is impossible to foretell what buildings will be required during the war, or indeed after it, we have made up the Works Development Reserve to £100,000. The Freehold Property Reserve has been increased by £29,298.

Last year I said that under the conditions then obtaining your Directors considered it prudent to have a substantial Contingencies Reserve. To-day, that is, obviously, even more desirable and we have accordingly transferred £250,000 to that Fund, bringing it up to £750,000.

Let me now revert to the matter of our stock-in-trade. You will appreciate that essential medicines are a vital need for the country alike in peace and in war. Therefore your Directors regarded it as their duty to make sure, as far as was humanly possible, that the supplies would be in the right place when they were wanted. Although this country is infinitely better placed than it was in 1914 to supply essential medicines and fine chemicals, a good many of the raw materials, particularly those of a vegetable origin, come from abroad.

It was in order to safeguard the supplies to the public that we built up a substantial increase in stock, a large proportion of which has already been turned into finished products and is stored all over the country. Remembering the transport difficulties during the past winter and the not remote possibility of further interruptions of transport in the coming months, I am sure you will agree with this policy. I need hardly say that all these stocks have appreciated in value since they were bought, but following our established policy, our prices have only been increased and will only be increased when our costs make it necessary.

In concentrating our main effort, as we have done, on essential medicines and surgical supplies, we have not always been able to provide full supplies of our whole range of Toilet Preparations. I am satisfied that our shareholders and customers will agree that at a time like the present we must subordinate the semi-luxury side of the business to the medicinal side. They can, however, rest assured that we shall continue to offer a reasonably wide range of toilet requisites as long as raw materials and containers are available.

Turning now to the Profit and Loss Account, you will see that our trading profit, after providing for contributions to Staff Pension Funds, Management Remuneration, Compulsory War Risks Insurance, and all forms of taxation, i.e. Income Tax, and E.P.T., amounts to £980,851, an increase of £29,842.

Repairs and Renewals and Provision for Depreciation all show increases, and we are left with a Net Profit for the year of £782,467, an increase of £6,175.

After payment of all Preference and Preferred Ordinary Dividends, and of four quarterly dividends of 6 per cent., less tax on Ordinary Shares, we have a balance of £301,717 which together with the balance brought forward amounts to £550,441, against £642,272.

For many years your Directors have recommended the payment of a bonus of 3*d*. per share (free of Tax) on the Ordinary Shares, but the introduction of the Limitation of Dividends Bill made this no longer possible, since the rise in Income Tax has the effect of increasing a tax free bonus.

Your Directors, therefore, recommend the payment of 4.1379 pence per share (less tax) on the Ordinary Shares, which is the gross value of a bonus of 3*d*. per share (free of Tax at 5*s*. 6*d*. in the £.) This absorbs £68,965, which together with the allocations already mentioned will leave £199,711 to be carried forward to next year.

We have easily had a record year for sales, both at home and abroad, but practically the entire profit on the increased volume has been absorbed, as I have said, by increased taxation, etc., and we are left with a smaller net profit than in 1937, when both our volume of trade and trading profit were considerably less than this year.

These results have been achieved under quite exceptionally arduous working conditions and with a staff inadequate for our requirements, for already over 1,300 have left to join the Forces. And though we have engaged temporary staff to the number of 1,650 to take their places, the amount of work has been so great that these new members of the staff have not made up for the experienced ones we have lost.

There is all the more reason, therefore, to pay a special meed of praise this year to the staff of the Offices, Laboratories, Warehouses and Shops for their excellent work in most trying circumstances and I know that you would like me to place on record our thanks for and appreciation of what they have done. Alike in the works and in the branches they have responded splendidly to all the calls made upon them and this in spite of the fact that they were often short-handed owing to the calling up of staff for the services and to absences through sickness during the exceptionally hard winter. In spite of all these difficulties we have received many tributes to their smiling and helpful service to their customers, and I have the fullest confidence that we can rely upon their devotion to duty and their courage in the stern days that lie ahead of us.

In addition to those who have joined the Forces, more than 5,500 of our staff have been trained in A.R.P. and First Aid Work. You will be glad to know that we have instituted a system of allowances for all married men serving with H.M. Forces and in certain other special cases we are supplementing Army pay.

One very important way in which the Firm are helping the national war effort is in the matter of War Savings Certificates. The various savings groups which have already been formed have 10,236 subscribers, and it is hoped that there will be a material increase in the individual holdings in the next few months.

During the year we have opened 25 new branches and, owing primarily to war conditions, have closed 10. The total number open at the end of March was 1,210.

As you will be aware, owing to the control of timber as well as of other building requisites, it is now practically impossible to carry out any alterations beyond those absolutely necessary on the medicinal side of the business. Our shopfitting works, however, are being kept employed on Government work, and so we hope to have our fully trained staff available when the time comes for us to tackle peace-time projects once again.

As I have said, our sales easily beat all previous records and the total number of retail sales transactions increased by over 8,500,000. Apart altogether from the war, the weather of last winter led to a bigger demand for Chemists' merchandise than for very many years.

Last year I referred in my speech to the steady increase which had taken place in our export trade. This year I am glad to be able to report further substantial development. The figures for the first four calendar months of this year are more than double those of the corresponding period of last year.

As you know, the Government have asked all Companies to pay particular attention to the development and expansion of their export business. We have taken our responsibilities in this connection very seriously and are only too anxious to play our part in association with Export Groups, to several of which we already belong. We are also co-operating with other exporting pharmaceutical organisations to the same end. In order to assist the Government's effort in this important matter, it has been necessary for a time to ration the home market in a few lines.

One peace-time practice which gave a good deal of pleasure to large numbers of our shareholders and customers was the conducting of visitors round our factories at Beeston, but this has had to be discontinued for the duration of the war.

MEDICINAL RESEARCH

The undesirability of perpetuating the goodwill in enemy proprietary medicines has led us to elaborate processes for the manufacture of British-made equivalents, and in several cases our products are now on the market. Methods of manufacture of other foreign-made drugs have also been under investigation by our research department since British manufacture would both save import and therefore shipping space, and also give us further lines to export.

In the case of certain chemicals, manufacture has been complicated by the fact that materials normally used as intermediates in their manufacture have not been purchasable and research has been necessary with a view either to manufacturing the intermediates ourselves, or to finding some alternative route to the final product.

All these tasks have thrown a very large amount of work on our research department and we have consequently expanded it very considerably.

The processes elaborated in our research department lead to production in the fine chemical department, and this has consequently also been extended. It may be of interest to note that the fine chemical department was called into being in 1915 as a result of the last war and has constantly developed during the last 25 years. It is now a valuable asset not only to the firm but also to the nation, particularly in its capacity for producing medicinal chemicals for home and export.

AGRICULTURE AND VETERINARY

We are conducting a considerable volume of research on the influence of nutrition and the special significance of trace elements on the health of farm stock as well as on the treatment of various diseases of animals. In this work we are co-operating with Agricultural Colleges, and also with individual veterinarians. We regard this side of our work as so important that we have now increased our staff on this side by the addition of a full time veterinary surgeon of the highest standing to advise us.

As a result of our association with the experiments carried out in Derbyshire on the prevention of swayback in lambs, we have put on the market our "Mindif" licks containing trace elements. They are enjoying a wide and increasingly large sale among sheep farmers.

Following researches on chemicals which stimulate the root-growth of plants, carried out in association with high authorities on the biological side, we have introduced a new product "Harvesan" containing these "growth hormones" in addition to the mercurial salts which protect crops from certain diseases. Extensive field experiments have proved that higher yields of grain and other crops can be obtained by the use of this preparation.

HORTICULTURE

During the last few years we have been busy building sound foundations on the horticultural side of our business, the consequence being that when the call came for the Nation to grow more of its own food we were in a position to give real help and this has led to a rapid expansion on that side of our business.

Since the war began we have assisted the Ministry of Agriculture by distributing through our branches some 300,000 of their leaflets dealing with food production in garden or farm.

Nobody to-day would forecast the business future, but our shareholders can rest assured that they have a sound business, well distributed for retail sales, and an organisation determined under all circumstances to live up to the slogan "Chemists to the Nation."

The report was unanimously adopted.